The Progressive

October 2014

Senate Up for Grabs

John Nichols on Mitch McConnell's Challenger

Steve Cobble on Why the Predictions Are Wrong

✚ Michael Eric Dyson on the Crisis in Ferguson

Republican Tsunami?

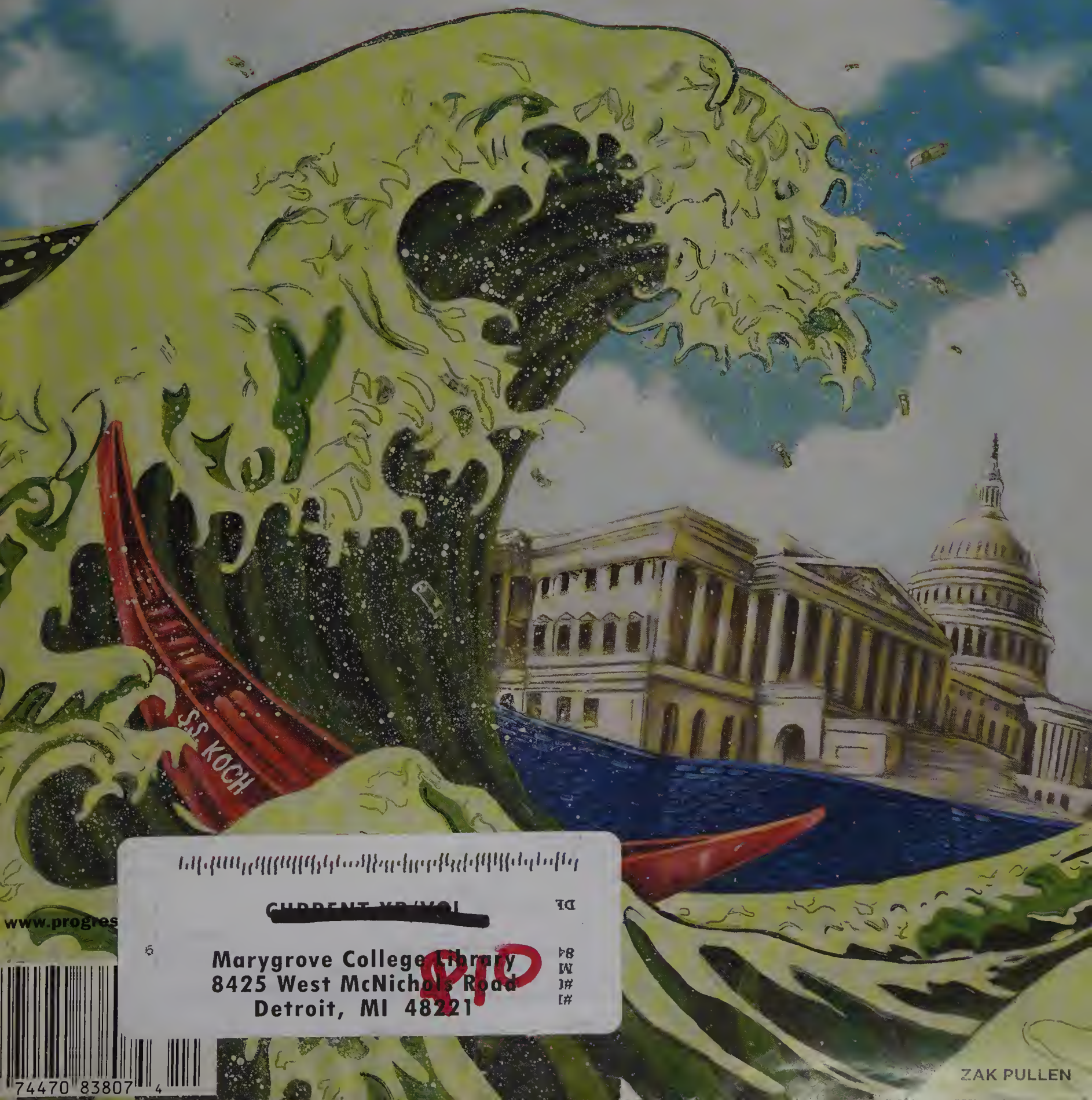

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PHOTO BY AP IMAGES/CHARLIE RIEDEL;
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PHOTO BY REESE ERLICH

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—Michael Eric Dyson

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The Progressive

Mission statement: To change the world, for the better.

The Progressive tackles the forces distorting our economy, corrupting our democracy, and imperiling our planet. Our reporting and analysis take on the modern-day robber barons, and champion peace, civil liberties, equality, and justice.

Cutting-edge investigations, must-read stories, beautiful writing, laugh-out-loud columns, inspiring interviews, and gorgeous art and poetry—that's our vision for making this magazine a vital part of the national conversation on the issues that matter.

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A Vision of Peace

This issue of our magazine focuses on the threat of a rightwing takeover of Congress in November—and how progressives can respond.

It's not just at the ballot box, but also through longer-term progressive organizing, and by raising our voices, that we can push back against the worst aspects of our politics.

This is true not just in domestic politics, to which we devote most of our space in this issue, but also in foreign policy.

What a comedown this final phase of Obama's Presidency has been, since the first Inaugural when he declared, "We reject as false the choice between our safety and our ideals. . . . Our power alone cannot protect us."

When George W. Bush and Dick Cheney took off over Washington in Marine One, and the crowd roared, their departure seemed to mark the end of a dark era: our disastrous military adventure in Iraq, waterboarding, domestic spying, mounting hatred of the United States abroad, and an endless, amorphous war on terror.

PHOTO BY GREG ANDERSON

Now the neocons' nightmare has returned in a new form, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

Horrifying YouTube videos show the beheadings of American journalists.

This sort of shocking violence provokes fear and anger—the enemies of rational thought and enlightened policy.

Republican politicians from John McCain to Paul Ryan barely skip a beat as they move from shock and revulsion at the news to blaming Obama—for drawing down U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, for failing to bomb more, send more weapons, keep more U.S. soldiers in the region.

There are no great options. But Obama, after stumbling by declaring in public, "We don't have a strategy yet" to respond to ISIS, took a page from George W. Bush, saying the United States and the nine-nation coalition he is pulling together will combat ISIS "the same way that we have gone after Al Qaeda."

Get ready for an even longer U.S. military entanglement.

Obama was right when he said in a speech last year that the United States "should not be the world's policeman."

Our country, which has lost so much credibility after years of drone strikes, spying, torture, and fruitless militarism, needs to take a back seat.

In his speech in Cairo in 2009, Obama said: "So long as our relationship is defined by our differences, we will empower those who sow hatred rather than peace, and who promote conflict rather than the cooperation that can help all of our people achieve justice and prosperity."

Until the United States makes good on that vision—not the Axis of Evil vision of George W. Bush or Obama's continuation of the war on terror—we will remain stuck in this recurring nightmare, using all our power, only to make things worse, unable to wake up with both our safety and our ideals intact. ◆

Ruth

The Blue Jean Rebellion

The November elections are upon us, and much hangs in the balance.

If the Republicans succeed in taking over the Senate, they could end President Obama's ability to make appointments to federal agencies and the federal bench.

Even without Senate control, the Republicans have blocked nominations and stalled the enforcement of labor laws and financial reform by holding up nominees to head the National Labor Relations Board and the new Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

If Ruth Bader Ginsburg or another Supreme Court justice retires, and the Republicans are in control, the party that vowed to make Obama's Presidency a failure might just leave the seat vacant until after the Presidential election in 2016.

And wait until the next debt ceiling showdown in March.

Senator Mitch McConnell has already pledged to extract concessions from the President as the price for preventing the United States from going into default.

Then there are the investigations—Obamacare, impeachment, and, of course, Benghazi, in the run-up to the 2016 Hillary Clinton campaign. Fox News will script the next two years.

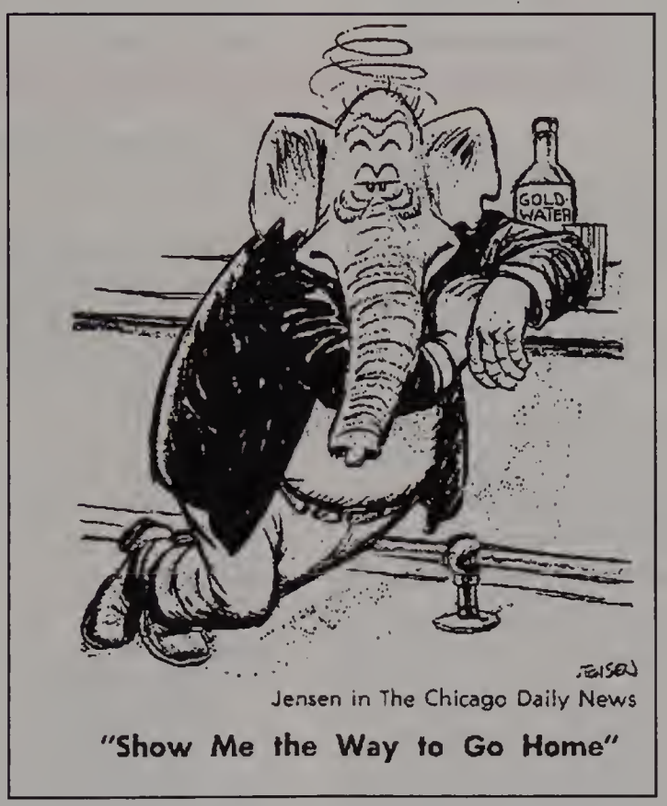
As for debating issues that actually matter to a majority of Americans, like regulating Wall Street or raising the minimum wage, with McConnell in charge of the calendar, you can bet there will be no hearings, let alone floor votes, on such matters.

We've already had a good preview of the Republican legislative agenda in the states.

"If you want to know what a wholly Republican Congress would do, the thing to do is to look at what they've done in state capitals where they can," Senator Sherrod Brown, Democrat of Ohio, told Mike Tomasky of *The Daily Beast* earlier this year. "In Ohio, they've gone after voters' rights, workers' rights, women's rights. They'd bring that to Washington."

The stakes are high. But voter turnout, in this non-Presidential year, is projected to be low.

That gap—between the urgency of the moment from a political and policy point of view, and the rampant alienation out in America's voting precincts—has set off a familiar cycle of hand-wringing.



The Progressive, December 1964

On a recemt public affairs show on Wisconsin Public Radio, callers all over the state registered their frustration with, and alienation from, the Democratic Party. One caller asserted that this year, he might not even vote. A series of outraged NPR listeners rushed to the phones to scold him, and express outrage at nonvoters everywhere, who allow our elections and our democracy to be taken over by the big-money interests so they can suppress wages, export jobs, destroy public schools, and tear up what's left of regulatory protections and the safety net.

The radio host joined the chorus: Voting is a sacred obligation, and not voting is not just irresponsible, it's immoral.

It's an understandable emotional response. But threatening and scolding, even pleading, do not actually motivate people to go to the polls.

Voter turnout in the United States lags all other established democracies, hovering around 40 percent in Congressional midterm years. We are suffering from a more serious problem than can be addressed with appeals to individual morality.

As Mike McCabe, the executive director of the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign, puts it, "We have one party that's scary and another that's scared."

In his new book, *Blue Jeans in High Places: The Coming Makeover of American Politics*, McCabe does his best to explain the condition of "politically homeless" voters like the people in the poor, rural Wisconsin county where he grew up. These farmers and small-town workers, to the everlasting consternation of far-away political analysts, either don't vote or vote against their own interests.

McCabe's dad, a struggling farmer with an eighth-grade education, never forgot the New Deal. To him, McCabe writes, "the Democrats were the party of the poor and the Republicans were the party of the rich."

But today's political landscape is utterly different.

Two generations ago, McCabe observes, rural Clark County sent fiery progressive populist Frank Nikolay to the state legislature. A generation later, the county was still represented by a Democrat. More recently, Clark County elected rabid rightwing Tea Partier Scott Suder, who went on to become majority leader in the state senate.

What happened?

In McCabe's analysis, it's not disaffected voters who lost their way. It's the Democratic Party that stopped earning their support.

"When Democrats won the hearts of a majority of people in the past, it was because the party had a big hand in creating things that tangibly benefited everyone or at least directly touched every American family in a major way," McCabe writes. "Social Security and Medicare. Rural electrification. The GI Bill. The interstate highway system."

Today, McCabe writes, a much bigger problem for the Democrats than Republicans' successful appeals to cultural conservatives on social issues is their own party's lack of ambition to help people who are not rich.

Republicans like Scott Walker have built a winning "rich-poor alliance" by exploiting the anxiety and resentment of strapped, nonunion private sector workers. Walker stirred the pot by talking about government pensions and health care benefits, and by reinforcing rural voters' suspicions that government doesn't work for them and politicians are corrupt.

Until the Dems start delivering, it's going to be hard to get poor farmers and small-town waitresses to rush out and vote for the next bland, good-looking, corporate Democrat.

McCabe talks about one young Democratic candidate who was coached to be "present and pleasant" and avoid taking controversial stands. She lost.

But there are signs that the situation McCabe describes may be improving. Senator Tammy Baldwin won in Wisconsin by taking a strong stand against job-killing trade agreements and for expanding access to health care.

Elizabeth Warren, Sherrod Brown, and Bernie Sanders won their campaigns with crossover appeal to socially conservative voters who responded to their progressive, populist message.

And as John Nichols reports in this issue, Mitch McConnell himself may be toppled by a progressive populist with deep roots in rural Kentucky.

If Alison Grimes beats McConnell, we may find ourselves in different territory.

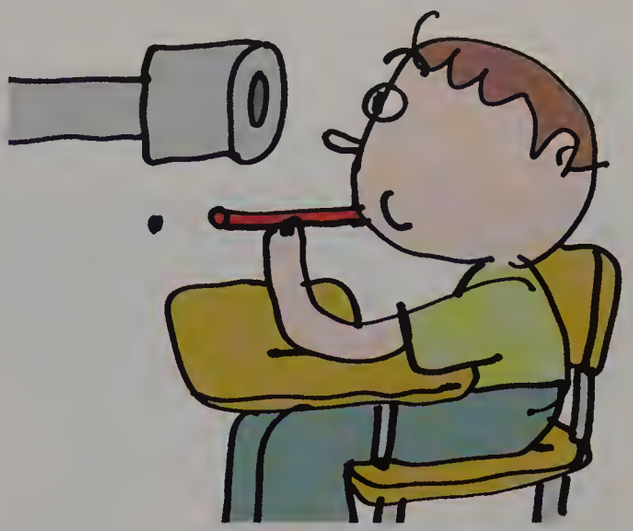
At the end of his book, Mike McCabe lays out a plan to build a savvy, innovative populist movement that can coalesce behind a "blue-jean candidate"—someone who genuinely represents our interests.

Now is the time, he writes. We have one party trying to take us back to the nineteenth century, and another one that's stuck in the twentieth.

This could be the year we move the clock ahead. ◆

—Ruth Conniff

The Pentagon Goes to School



City police departments aren't the only ones taking advantage of the Pentagon's offer of free or low-cost surplus armaments. Ten different school districts in Texas have also stocked up, according to KHOU. They "received sixty-four M16 rifles, eighteen M14 rifles, twenty-five automatic pistols, and magazines capable of holding 4,500 rounds of ammunition, as well as armored plating, tactical vests, and fifteen surplus military vehicles."

McDonald's Advice

Kathryn Slater-Carter, who owns a McDonald's in Daly City, California, told *The Washington Post* that a company representative advised her, "You'd make more money if you pay your employees less."

Beheading Jokes

Gordon Klingenschmitt, who is running for a seat in Colorado's assembly, sent out an e-mail that condemned "the openly homosexual Congressman Jared Polis." The e-mail said: "Democrats like Polis want to bankrupt Christians who refuse to worship and endorse his sodomy. Next he'll join ISIS in beheading Christians, but not just in Syria, right here in America."

A Sheriff on Your Scent

Mike Yates, chief of police in Jonesboro, Arkansas, resigned in August after controversy erupted over comments he made on Facebook about a reporter at the Jonesboro Sun, *according to Reuters. He said she was "pro-dope smoking," a "leftwing liberal," and "smelly."*

Football, Prayer, and the Constitution

Troy Schmidt, a Florida pastor, is upset that he can no longer lead the Olympia High School football team in prayer after a complaint from the Freedom from Religion Foundation. "They're telling us to be atheists, when we want to say this is what we believe," he said on *Fox and Friends*. "And we want to express it freely like the Constitution says."

P.R. for Police Brutality

The city of Ferguson, Missouri, has hired a public relations firm after protests erupted over the killing of Michael Brown. The outfit, Common Ground Public Relations, says on its website that its "highly skilled professionals . . . sincerely enjoy the work of counseling our clients."

Welcome to High School

Miranda Larkin moved from Seattle to Clay County, Florida, eight days before school started, *The Washington Post* reported. On her third day of school, she was wearing a short black skirt when a teacher sent her to the nurse's office for violating the school dress code. "She was forced to put on red sweatpants and a hideous, oversized neon yellow T-shirt with DRESS CODE VIOLATION emblazoned across the chest and down the leg," the *Post* noted.

Readers are invited to submit No Comment items. Please send original clippings or photocopies and give the name and date of publication to editorial@progressive.org or 409 E. Main Street, Madison, WI, 53703. Submissions cannot be acknowledged or returned.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY STUART GOLDENBERG

Bravo

I have just finished reading cover to cover the July-August issue and have to congratulate you on a splendid job.

Your new look is appealing, and your merger with the Center for Media and Democracy has certainly paid off big time.

What did I like best in this issue? The article "Voucher School Tour." What an exposé! And how frightening!

I also liked "I Lost My Seat to the Koch Brothers" (by Jo Ann Taube).

Speaking of the Koch brothers, your definitive article ("The Real Story of the Koch Brothers," by Lisa Graves) on how they are trying to take over our democracy laid it out in spades.

The article on ALEC ("How ALEC Fronts for Fossil Fuels," by Nick Surgey) was also illuminating.

Keep up the good work. Yours is my favorite publication.

Cornelia Smollin
Pittsburgh

Voucher Tour Feedback

Congratulations on Ruth Conniff's "Voucher School Tour" (July-August issue). Her reporting on Milwaukee's voucher schools is vitally important, and the effort to privatize public schools through unregulated vouchers and storefront fly-by-nighters must be opposed.

David Giffey
Arena, Wisconsin

How to Fight the Plutocrats?

I was most impressed by your July-August "Attack of the Plutocrats" edition. But in all honesty, you need to give us another special edition containing the always-elusive missing piece: How are we going to get all of this done?

Willard B. Shapira
Roseville, Minnesota

Giving Proper Credit

While it was a joy to see the rare publication of an editorial cartoon in your July-August issue (page 17), I was dismayed that *The Progressive* didn't give proper credit to the cartoonist, John Baer, known in his day as the "dean of labor cartoonists." Baer worked extensively during the Progressive and New Deal eras. In fact, he is credited with coining the phrase "New Deal" in a 1931 cartoon.

Baer was also a Wisconsin native, born in Black Creek in 1886. He graduated from Lawrence University in Appleton in 1909. His mother was the poet Libbie C. Baer. He moved to North Dakota and was elected to Congress in 1916 on the Nonpartisan League ticket, the only labor cartoonist ever elected to the House. Until his death in 1970, Baer contributed cartoons to many labor union newspapers, including *Labor*, the National Railroad Union newspaper.

The Progressive published a rare gem without knowing its true value.

Mike Konopacki,
Huck/Konopacki Labor Cartoons
Madison, Wisconsin

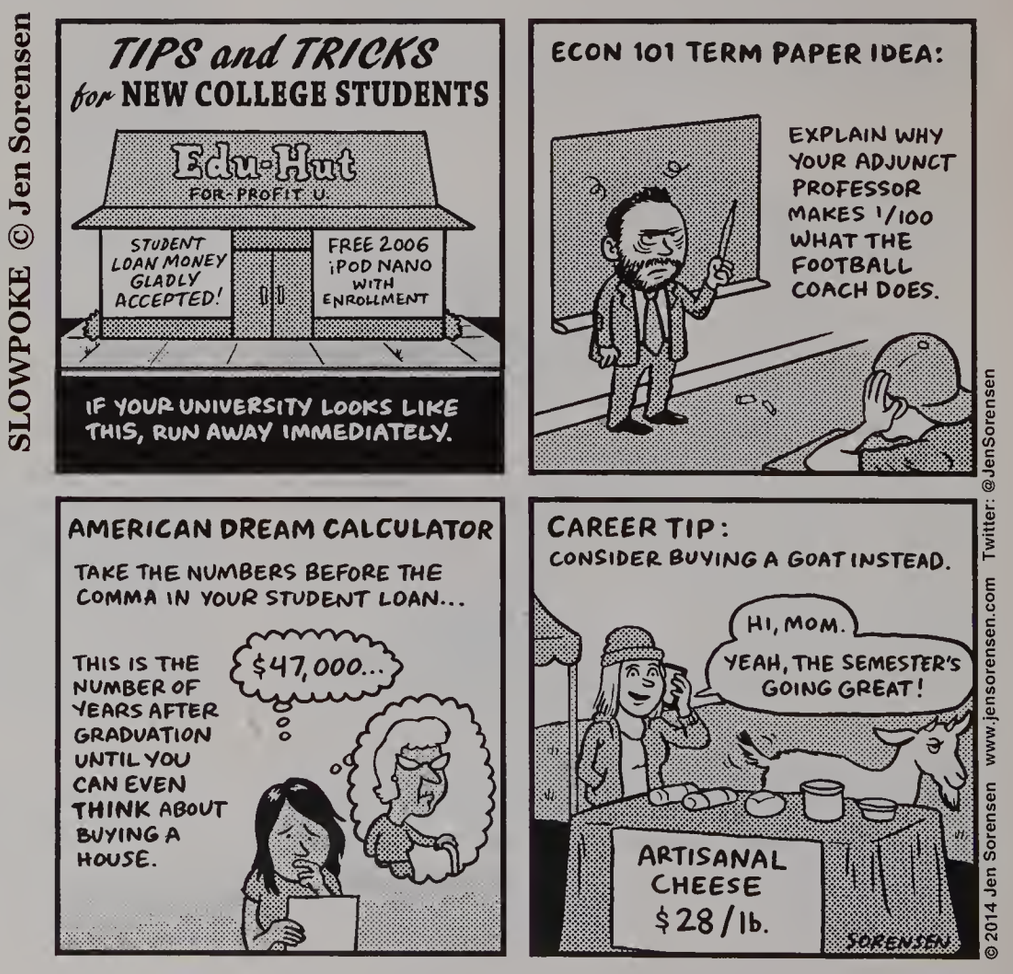

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PHOTO BY DAVE CARSON VIA AP IMAGES

Ferguson Demands Justice for Michael Brown

For more than two weeks, citizens in Ferguson, Missouri, took to the streets to protest the August 9 shooting of Michael Brown, an unarmed African American teenager, by police officer Darren Wilson. Brown was shot at least six times, and several witnesses reported that Brown had his hands in the air when the final shot was fired. The police quickly cordoned off the area, but left Brown's body on display for hours after the shooting.

In response to citizen marches, police in body armor laid siege to Ferguson, driving armored vehicles and using high-powered weapons aimed at the demonstrators. Approximately 200 protesters were arrested, along with a number of journalists.

While Ferguson waits for justice in the killing of Michael Brown, the nation is having a long-overdue debate on racism and the militarization of local police.

PHOTO BY JIM WEST

Showdown over Emissions in Coal Country

On July 31, competing protests by miners and environmentalists in Pittsburgh highlighted tensions surrounding new EPA rules that will lower carbon emissions of power plants 30 percent by 2030. EPA representatives were in Pittsburgh for a daylong listening session to hear public comments on the proposed rules.

Hundreds of young people and environmentalists rallied in support of sustainable energy and green jobs. Pittsburgh resident Charles McCollester's sign read: "As long as blue union jobs are pitted against green earth health, we are all doomed."

Meanwhile, thousands of coal miners and their union supporters marched in downtown Pittsburgh in opposition. Many of the protesters fear that cutting carbon will also lead to job cuts, particularly in communities in Appalachian regions that have long been tied to the boom and bust cycle of coal mining.

There are now more solar industry jobs in the United States than coal industry jobs, and the EPA estimates that the energy efficiency sector will create 76,200 to 112,000 jobs by 2025.

You can comment on the clean power plan proposed rule at EPA.gov.

PHOTO BY UNITED STUDENTS AGAINST SWEATSHOPS

Students Target The North Face and REI

Nearly two dozen people were arrested during a demonstration against sweatshops at an REI store near Washington, D.C., on July 26, one of more than thirty rallies across the United States that day.

The protest, organized by United Students Against Sweatshops, was intended to put pressure on the outdoor recreation store for continuing to carry goods produced by clothing manufacturer The North Face.

The students are protesting the fact that The North Face has declined to sign the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh, an agreement which would require companies to contribute up to $500,000 per year for safety improvements in garment factories and to conduct independent safety inspections.

More than 170 brands and retailers have signed on to the accord, which was created after a series of calamities drew global attention to working conditions in Bangladesh, including a fire that killed 112 garment workers and a building collapse that killed 1,127.

While public pressure has succeeded in forcing some major clothing retailers to address conditions in Bangladesh, not all companies have been willing to sign on to the accord, which is legally binding and has drawn significant support from unions. Instead, The North Face has decided to sign on to a nonbinding voluntary accord promoted by Gap and Walmart.

Learn more at usas.org.

We obtained this document from a public records request in Ohio, which shows the draft agenda for the American City County Exchange's (ACCE) first meeting in July 2014. ACCE is a new operation of the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), the forty-year-old corporate-funded group that has promoted a slew of anti-worker bills, voter suppression bills, extreme gun bills—including "Stand Your Ground"—and bills to crush renewable energy. The Center for Media and Democracy unmasked the organization in 2011 with ALECexposed.org. At ALEC, corporate lobbyists actually vote as equals with lawmakers on "model" bills to change Americans' rights. At ALEC conferences lawmakers are wined and dined. ACCE will do that same thing as ALEC, but aims at our city and county officials.

ACCE held its first conference during the ALEC annual meeting in Dallas. Sponsors of the ALEC meeting included fossil-fuel companies Koch Industries, ExxonMobil, and Peabody Energy, tobacco companies Altria and Reynolds American, and the payday loan company Advance America. The American Bail Coalition, which represents for-profit bail corporations, is the first "Private Sector Co-Chair" of ACCE.

Members were briefed on how ALEC and ACCE work. Between sessions, there were many opportunities for lobbyists to chat with elected officials and underwrite parties for them.

ACCE Conference in Dallas

Wednesday July 30th
1:45 - 3:00 New Member Orientation
3:15 - 4:30 Workshop #1 (Privatization)

Thursday July 31st
9:30 - 10:45 Workshop #2 (Coordination push against federal mandates)
11:00 - 12:15 Workshop #3 (Priority based budgeting)
3:15 - 4:15 Workshop #4 (Reasonable Growth vs Smart Growth)

4:30 - 5:15 ACCE Committees Formation, Model Policy

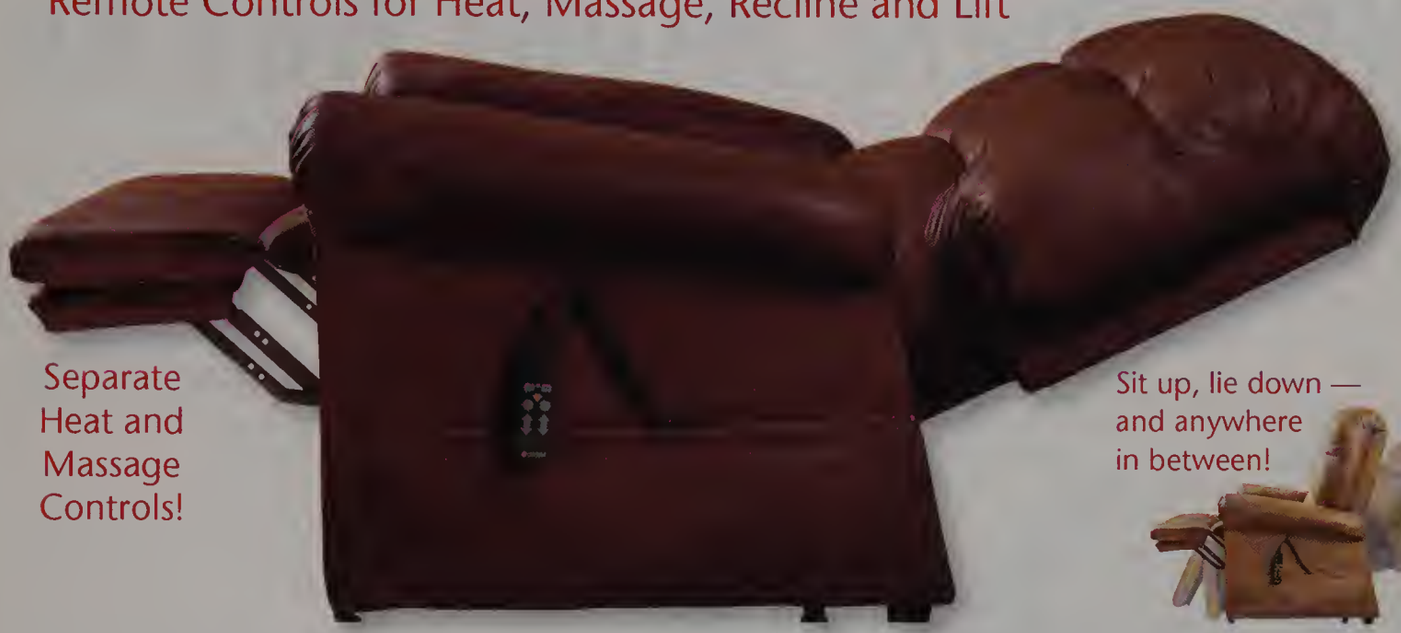
There is lots of profit to be made by ALEC corporations from privatizing local public services, estimated to be worth $6 trillion. ALEC has been promoting privatization for decades, but many of the decisions are made at the local level where ACCE will operate. The name of this presentation was later changed to "Effective Tools for Promoting Limited Government," a friendlier way of saying "privatization."

Added to the agenda before the event: "Releasing Local Governments from the Grip of Collective Bargaining. Presenter: Fort Wayne City Councilman Mitch Harper."

"To you, it's the perfect lift chair. To me, it's the best sleep chair I've ever had."

— J. Fitzgerald, VA

Remote Controls for Heat, Massage, Recline and Lift



Separate Heat and Massage Controls!

Sit up, lie down — and anywhere in between!

We've all had nights when we just can't lie down in bed and sleep, whether it's from heartburn, cardiac problems, hip or back aches – it could be a variety of reasons. Those are the nights we'd give anything for a comfortable chair to sleep in, one that reclines to exactly the right degree, raises feet and legs to precisely the desired level, supports the head and shoulders properly, operates easily even in the dead of night, and sends a hopeful sleeper right off to dreamland.

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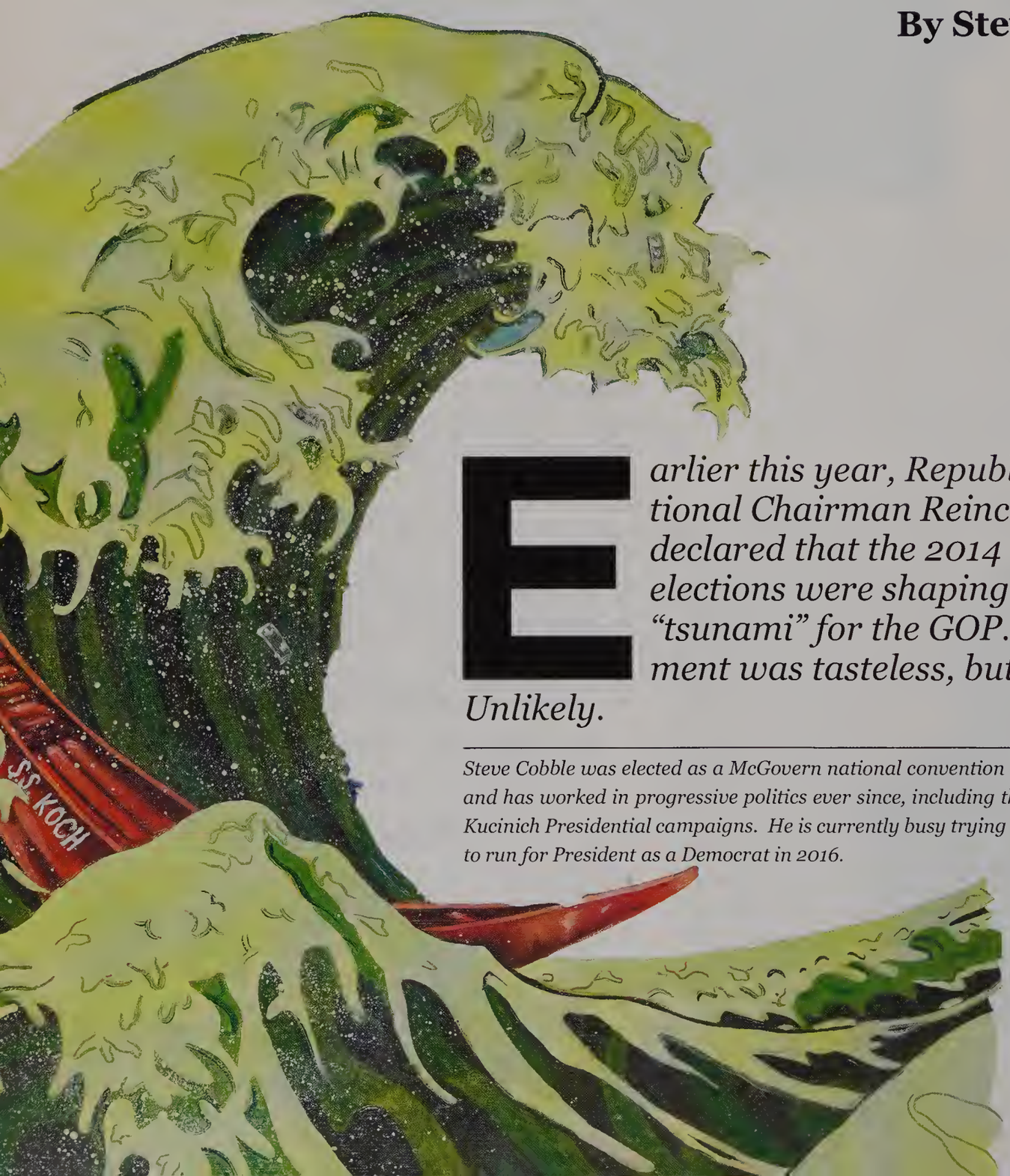
Why There Might Not Be a GOP Tsunami

By Steve Cobble



Earlier this year, Republican National Chairman Reince Priebus declared that the 2014 midterm elections were shaping up to be a "tsunami" for the GOP. His comment was tasteless, but was it true? Unlikely.

Steve Cobble was elected as a McGovern national convention delegate at age twenty, and has worked in progressive politics ever since, including the Jackson, Nader, and Kucinich Presidential campaigns. He is currently busy trying to draft Bernie Sanders to run for President as a Democrat in 2016.

Let's start with the House of Representatives, where there may be small GOP gains—if any gains at all. This may surprise you, because you've doubtless heard some pundit blab on about the six-year itch that is likely to hurt the Democrats in the middle of Barack Obama's second term.

Historically, voters do tend to rebel after six years of one President in office and throw out a bunch of his House allies. But the massive gains won by the Tea Party in 2010 mean that there are just not that many new House seats sitting out there for Republicans this time around. Plus, House Republicans poll lower than head lice.

Or consider this year's governors' races, which actually tilt slightly toward the Democrats at the moment. Because governors serve four-year terms, the Republicans have to defend many more governors who won during the Tea Party wave of 2010. There is a decent chance that the Democrats can actually take back some seats this year.

As I write this, Maine and Pennsylvania seem likely to retire conservative Republicans, while Democratic incumbents are struggling in Illinois and Arkansas. But most of the next batch of contested gubernatorial races are in states held by Republicans, including some of the best-known GOP governors, like Scott Walker of Wisconsin and Rick Scott in Florida. If these big names get the boot, or if Republican incumbents are upset in states like Georgia, Kansas, Michigan, New Mexico, Ohio, or South Carolina, then the Democrats are likely to make gubernatorial gains this year, interfering with the predicted GOP wave.

However, I've been working in electoral politics since the McGovern campaign in 1972, and I'm well aware that some events count more than others. If Republicans gain six seats in the Senate, Priebus may get bragging rights anyway.

As of now, it's too close to call. It's so close that it may not be over on Election Night, if leading candidates in states like Louisiana and Georgia fail to break 50 percent and have to go to a runoff.

Harry Reid is barely hanging on to control of his chamber, as Democratic candidates face poor terrain, missing turnout, and big money.

What do I mean by poor terrain? Because Senators serve six-year terms, unlike governors, and because 2008 was an excellent year for Democrats with Obama leading the ticket, the 2014 Senate geography is almost bad enough to make Mitch McConnell smile.

The Republicans can at least theoretically take control of the Senate on their own turf, by winning in six out of seven states that Mitt Romney carried: Alaska, Arkansas, Louisiana, Montana, North Carolina, South Dakota, and West Virginia.

From the 2004 to the 2008 Presidential elections, most of the country became more Democratic, in many counties by a lot. But there was one notable patch of holdouts—a swath of Appalachian counties that ran from western Pennsylvania over to eastern Texas. This swath includes four of the states with targeted Senate battles this year: Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, and West Virginia.

In addition, Democratic retirements, plus the Republicans landing most of the recruits they wanted, mean that the GOP has a chance to win difficult races even in states that Romney did not carry in 2012 (like Colorado, Iowa, Michigan, and New Hampshire).

Then there's the midterm "drop-off" in voter turnout.

There is no question that midterm elections feature much lower turnout than do elections in Presidential years. Sadly, up to one-fourth or even one-third of the voters who turn out to vote for President stay home during the midterm elections two years later.

This missing turnout is made worse for progressives by the demographic truth that the dropouts are not distributed evenly. More African Americans and Latinos, more single women, more young people and poor people are likely to stay home, skewing the electorate toward older, whiter, and wealthier voters. As happened in 2010, this may be especially true without Barack Obama on the ballot, given his special attraction to key Democratic voting groups.

The last depressing factor is money—big money, dark money, the 1 percent's money.

The tragedy is that big money in our politics has become such a standard fact of life that the

media often slide right over it, acting as if million-dollar ad buys or massive amounts of negative advertising fueled by dark money from unknown, outside groups, unleashed months and months before Election Day, have always been the norm in Senate races. They have not.

The amount of outside money coming into our politics is swelling, especially since the Supreme Court's pernicious *Citizens United* decision, which opened the floodgates for big money, for corporate money, for dark money. The grassroots movement to amend the Constitution to eliminate the idiotic legal fictions that money is speech and corporations are people has gained great momentum.

But winning Constitutional amendments takes time, as we know, and meanwhile the Koch brothers and Karl Rove and the Chamber of Commerce crowd are pressing their advantage, continuing to extend their economic clout into direct political power.

More money is going to be spent this year than in any midyear election ever, much from unknown sources.

And part of the reason the GOP unleashed such a fierce attack on the IRS a couple of years ago was to make sure that the watchdogs would be muzzled.

The rightwing dark money has been flooding in to all the targeted races, especially the Senate races, earlier for harsher attacks than

ever before.

This is a trend that will continue until we, the people, make it stop.

In truth, while a Senate takeover by the GOP would be depressing, it would have smaller legislative effects than advertised, mostly because there is already no chance of passing any worthwhile legislation through John Boehner's House right now.

A GOP Senate takeover would likely accelerate President Obama's plans to use his executive tools to take action on issues like climate change, a fairer economy, and the war on drugs. Republican control of the Senate might even intensify that strategy, since daring executive actions by the President on an issue like, say, immigration, would inspire new heights of frenzy among the wingnuts, leading to louder and more insistent demands for impeachment.

Since the GOP's impeachment threats would require an unattainable two-thirds vote to convict in the Senate, those tactics would ultimately fail. And since the public opposes impeaching Obama, the whole tactic becomes a catch-22 trap for the GOP, where its rightwing drives the party to act, while the voters reject it for doing so—a dynamic which once boosted Bill Clinton and damaged Newt Gingrich.

But GOP control of Congress would not be fun. For one, the GOP could double the number of "investigations" against the Obama Administration ("Benghazi!").

There would also be legislative setbacks at moments when the President is on the defensive, such as with the hysteria about Central American children crossing the border or the shifting demand for war in Syria/Iraq. The Republicans could ram through "stupid stuff" that the White House might be too timid to veto, and we would all pay the price. And on the judicial front, Obama would have a much harder time confirming progressive nominees for the federal bench, including the all-important Supreme Court.

A GOP Senate would try to do its damage quickly, too, mindful that its time in power might be short-lived because the terrain in 2016 for the Senate races is the flip side of this year's bad Democratic terrain.

It is a fool's errand to count up victories in races that are more than two years away, so I won't do it (fool or not), but it is nevertheless true that the 2016 Senate seats will be those that were carried by Republicans in the 2010 Tea Party takeover. This means that they have a lot more tenuous turf to defend, including several blue states that the Democratic Presidential nominee is expected to carry, and featuring the larger and more diverse electorate that will vote in 2016. (Are you listening, Russ Feingold?)

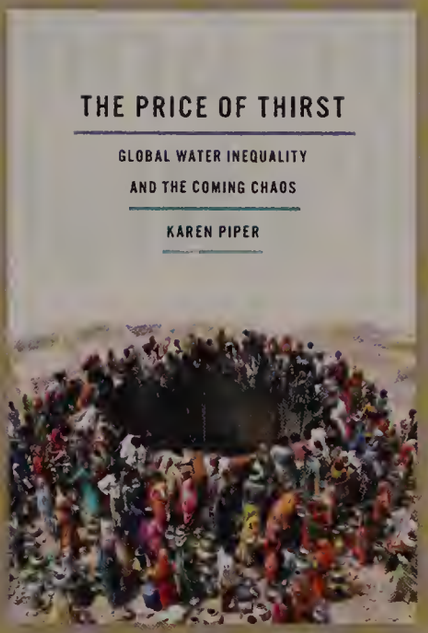
In any case, the 2014 Senate races are not over, and despite all the hype, the GOP has not yet prevailed. Given the red voting habits in most of the battleground states,

plus the amount of early money that has washed into them, it is somewhat amazing that these races are still in doubt.

But they are, and the Democrats have tough, tested incumbents like Mark Begich in Alaska, Mark Pryor in Arkansas, and Kay Hagan in North Carolina defending their seats with a chance to hang on.

There is still a real chance that Alison Grimes will retire Mitch McConnell (at last!). There's even a chance that Pat Roberts will pay a price at the polls for making it clear that he returns to Kansas less often than Toto. And progressive populist Rick Weiland may yet maneuver his grassroots campaign through a four-way race to pull off a surprise win in South Dakota, the 2014 version of Heidi Heitkamp's big upset in North Dakota two years ago.

If any of that happens, the Republican "tsunami" may turn out to be a lot of froth. ◆



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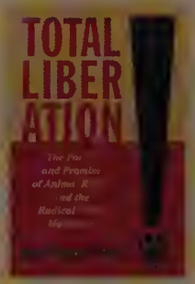

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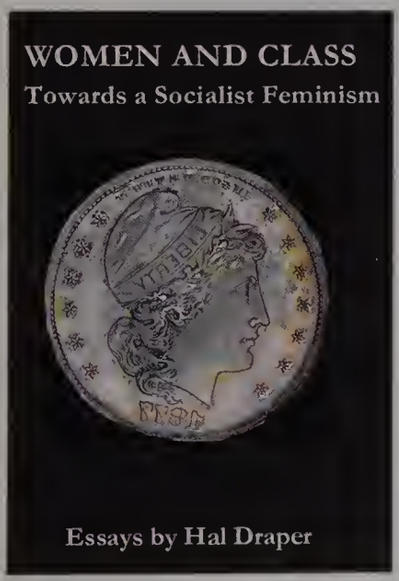
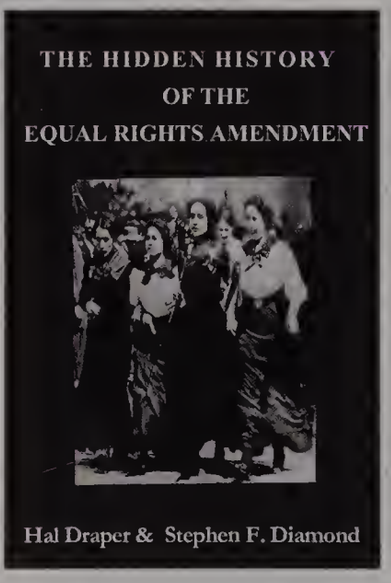


This book recounts the origins of the modern feminist movement in the revolutionary movements of the 19th century. Beginning with an account of the first organized women's move-ment, La Société des Citoyennes Républicaines et Revolutionnaires, on the left of the French Revolutionary movement, this book tells the story of women's movements in England, France and Germany. It is a story that has rarely been told in English.



In the early 1970s in California, at the height of the movement to pass an ERA, a split developed within the feminist movement. One of the consequences of the proposed legislation would be eliminate existing legal protections for women workers. One solution was to extend protective laws to men. A solution that was rejected by most feminists. Draper and his co-author, Stephen F. Diamond, discovered that this split went all the way back to the 1920s.

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Meet Alison Grimes, McConnell's Nightmare

By John Nichols

The luckiest break Democrats have had in the 2014 election cycle—a political twist so significant that it could allow the party to maintain control of the United States Senate—resulted from a strikingly stupid political scheme.

For several months in early 2013, Democrats in Washington entertained the notion of running movie star Ashley Judd against Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, the dark prince of American politics who promises that if Republicans win control of the Senate this fall he will end debates about increasing the minimum wage, regulating banks, protecting the environment, and addressing the corrupting influence of corporate cash on American elections and governance. Judd's a fine actress, with an impressive résumé of humanitarian and political activism, along with childhood roots in the Bluegrass State. But McConnell and his pals were positively gleeful at the notion of running against a jet-setting celebrity who had spent much of her adult life in the general environs of Hollywood and Nashville.

A funny thing happened, though, on the way to electoral oblivion. Judd decided she didn't want to take the hits that the haters were preparing on McConnell's behalf. That left national Democrats with no choice but to get serious about beating the man who has for a quarter century curried the favor of Wall Street as part of a long-term plan to become Senate Majority Leader.

What they realized, grudgingly, was that the smart strategy for beating McConnell was never going to run through the Hollywood hills. It runs through Stanton, the city of 2,733 that serves as the seat of overwhelmingly rural Powell County in east-central Kentucky, and through hundreds of small cities and towns across a state where rural voters are, when properly motivated, entirely capable of finding the Democratic line on the ballot. So, Democrats went local, convincing Secretary of State Alison Lundergan Grimes—who actually "gets" that Powell County and rural Kentucky matter, a lot, for Democrats—to be their candidate.

Grimes knows how to speak to Stanton, and communities like it—not by veering right on social issues, and not merely by making respectful references to farming and rural development, but by going populist on economics and promising to do battle with "the people on the top in both parties."

That understanding is what distinguishes Grimes and her candidacy.

She knows that she can win the big city of Louisville, which already elects one of the most progressive members of the U.S. House, Democratic Congressman John Yarmuth, and that gave President Obama a solid win in 2012.

But Grimes also knows that, to upend McConnell, she

John Nichols is the Washington correspondent for The Nation *and associate editor of the* Capital Times *in Madison, Wisconsin.*

must win the places that didn't vote for Obama when he lost the state by a 60-38 margin. She understands that voters in rural regions rely on programs like Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid—as well as unemployment insurance, public education, and post offices. She recognizes that the majority of citizens in small cities, towns, and rural areas tend to be a good deal more interested in having champions on those issues than mouthpieces of partisan or ideological division.

To D.C. insiders, rural Kentucky is off the map for Democrats. Barack Obama won around 35 percent of the vote in Powell County in 2012—roughly the same percentage that he got in rural areas nationally. And no Democratic Presidential candidate has won the majority of the vote in Powell County since Bill Clinton's 51 percent in 1996.

AP IMAGES

So why bother? Because, despite some top-of-the-ticket Republican tendencies, Powell County regularly votes for Democrats in local and state races. In fact, there are hundreds of rural counties in supposedly "red" states across the country that, with a little attention and prodding, can and will vote Democratic. Those counties have been, and remain, key to Democratic electoral prospects in lower-turnout "off-year" elections. For instance, in 2006, they played a critical role in restoring Democratic majorities in the U.S. House and Senate. In 2012, Democrats maintained their majority in the Senate by winning seats in heavily rural states such as Montana and North Dakota, and in states such as Indiana and Missouri, where the rural population is higher than the national average. All of those states backed Mitt Romney for President and Democrats for the Senate, with some of the most significant ticket-splitting taking place in rural areas.

That pattern will have to repeat in 2014 if Democrats hope to maintain their shaky grip on the Senate. But, to do that, Democrats must make the connection to small-farm and small-town voters with candidates who appreciate the nuances of rural America.

If Democrats were smart about candidate recruitment, they would have recognized from the start that they needed Grimes—or someone very much like her—to make a race of it with McConnell, a wily career politician who has parlayed special-interest money and crude negative campaigns into his leadership of Senate Republicans.

Grimes is the sort of candidate who can run up the vote in urban counties while prying rural counties back from the Republicans. When she was elected Secretary of State in 2011, in her first statewide race and against serious Republican opposition, Grimes collected more than 70 percent of the vote in Powell County. In fact, she swept rural counties across the state. Grimes did not run to the right in that campaign. She actually opposed the voter ID laws that conservatives say are so popular, calling them "a resurrection of Jim Crow laws, in essence what I equate to being a poll tax."

What was key was that she made her point in a way that had particular appeal in rural Kentucky, noting

that the GOP's restrictive rules would require her ninety-one-year-old grandmother—who appeared with the candidate in folksy TV ads during the 2011 campaign—"to go get a government-issued ID to vote at the precinct she's been voting at for the last forty years."

Grimes has a flair for putting issues in perspective, answering questions about marriage equality by saying, "My husband and I have been married for seven years, and I believe others should have the opportunity to make that same commitment." On reproductive rights, she says, "I come from a family of five women. I would never pretend to tell one of my sisters what to do with her body, and don't want the federal government doing that, either."

Grimes is not a classic lefty, except in McConnell's attack ads. Though she has attracted plenty of support from unions, as well as Emily's List and pro-choice groups, the Democrat distances herself from the Obama Administration on energy policy. You will not hear her criticizing coal. But she does criticize the clunkier elements of the Affordable Care Act. Grimes delights in saying, "I am as much a cheerleader for President Obama as Senator McConnell is a Chippendale dancer."

She has to win over rural Kentucky, just as other Democrats who hope to prevail in Senate contests this year—in states such as Alaska, Arkansas, Georgia, Montana, and Oregon—must hold their own in rural regions if they hope to prevail. Frankly, Democrats across the country might want to borrow a few pages from the Grimes playbook. Unlike too many national Democrats, she is aggressively pro-union, declaring, "Right to Work is wrong for Kentucky. . . . It's just another word for union busting, and as your United States Senator I will have none of it." She's all in for higher wages, pay equity, and making college more affordable. In speeches, she can sound a bit like Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren, especially when Grimes is pitching herself as "someone that wants to give the middle class of Kentucky a fighting chance to actually survive."

But this goes beyond Warren's "Democratic wing of the Democratic Party" politics to something older, more visceral. The Grimes campaign channels the enthusiasms of William Jennings Bryan and Franklin Roosevelt, while rejecting the medium-cool strategies of today's D.C. Democrats. She jabs at McConnell with delight, portraying him as a tool of corporate interests who has done well for himself while doing harm to working folks in Kentucky.

"What can happen in thirty years?" asks a Grimes TV ad that began airing in August. "A Senator can become a multimillionaire in public office while voting seventeen times against raising the minimum wage, three times for corporate tax breaks that send Kentucky jobs overseas and twelve times against extending unemployment benefits for laid-off workers."

The McConnell camp is squealing, accusing Grimes of running a campaign that is "nothing short of despicable." But Elizabeth Warren is impressed.

The Massachusetts Senator swept into Kentucky for a June rally on the University of Louisville campus, where she accused McConnell of deciding "it's more important to protect the billionaires" than students struggling with loan debt. "Send us Alison Grimes instead of Mitch McConnell, and you . . . fundamentally change the United States Senate."

The Warren rally got lots of attention from state and national media, which was fine by Grimes.

There was no such attention a few weeks earlier when, on a Tuesday morning in May, the candidate arrived in Stanton to rally local Democrats in the parking lot of the Elkins Insurance office on Main Street. But when the votes are counted in November, it will be Powell County and the rest of rural Kentucky that decide whether to change the world. If Grimes can hold her own in rural regions, Democrats will come away from the 2014 election with more than just a replacement for Mitch McConnell. They will get the message that, when Democrats pay serious attention to rural America, rural America gives Democrats the votes they need to win. ◆

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More Dark Money Than Ever

By Brendan Fischer

2014 will almost certainly be the most expensive, most secretive Senate election in history. But just wait for 2016.

In just the first half of 2014, with months to go before the general election begins to heat up, groups other than the campaigns had already reported spending more than $100 million.

But that $100 million did not include spending from dark money nonprofits—like David Koch's Americans for Prosperity—that sidestep reporting requirements simply by avoiding words like "vote for" or "vote against." The Koch-backed group spent around $35 million in just the first half of the year, more than twice as much as it had spent at the same point during the 2012 election cycle.

Secret spending will easily exceed the $300 million dark money record set in the last Presidential election.

"We've already seen a flood of secret money, but there is a lot more to come," says Robert Maguire, a researcher at the Center for Responsive Politics (which publishes OpenSecrets.org).

Americans for Prosperity has been by far the biggest secret spender in 2014. According to a leaked memo, the group is expected to drop $125 million in 2014. Yet a source familiar with Americans for Prosperity says that is a "very conservative estimate. We're on track for more than that."

And that's just one group. The vast Koch political network, which altogether raised at least $400 million in the 2012 election, has sprouted new patches of astroturf just in time for 2014. Audio from the most recent Koch donor summit indicates the Koch network plans to spend $290 million in 2014, almost all of it undisclosed.

After Obama's win in 2012 demonstrated that ad buys alone cannot guarantee electoral victory, some Koch groups began supplementing their ad spending with a ground game.

The Koch-backed Libre Initiative—which says it is focused on educating "Hispanic communities about economic freedom principles"—has begun spending not only on Spanish and English language ads, but also on doing direct outreach to the Latino community through English classes and health clinics. (See "The Koch Brothers' Latino Front," by Ed Morales, in the September issue of *The Progressive*.)

Brendan Fischer is general counsel of The Progressive, Inc.

Generation Opportunity, the Koch millennial project described as a "free-thinking, liberty-loving, national organization of young people," started running its deceptive anti-Affordable Care Act ads featuring creepy Uncle Sam in 2013, and has continued to push its message throughout 2014. It too has gone on the road: Its cadre of young rightwingers staffed tables at mainstream summer festivals around the country throughout the warmer months, and it launched a well-funded anti-Obamacare roadshow in the fall.

And groups that had previously acted merely as a conduit for Koch funds, including Freedom Partners and the Center to Protect Patient Rights (now American Encore) have also begun directly engaging in elections.

The right has dominated the dark money game, but some liberal groups are also trying to catch up.

"Liberal groups are spending more than they ever have" on undisclosed expenditures, Maguire says, "but are still not spending secretly to the same degree" as secretly funded groups backing Republicans.

One such group is Patriot Majority, a 501(c)(4) that is spendings millions on ads in this election cycle. It backs Democratic candidates, but its spending is vastly outstripped by Koch's Americans for Prosperity.

The full extent of spending by Patriot Majority, the Kochs, and other dark money wizards won't be known until the groups file their tax returns nearly a year after the elections. (The $400 million that the Koch political network poured into the 2012 elections wasn't identified until the fall of 2013, nearly a year after the 2012 election results were in.) And even by late 2015, the public won't know the true source of the funds.

Not surprisingly, the explosion of big secret bucks can be traced back to the U.S. Supreme Court's disastrous 2010 decision in *Citizens United v. FEC*, which opened the door for corporations, both for-profit and non-profit, to raise and spend unlimited sums on elections.

Only $5.8 million in dark money was spent in the 2004 elections. It jumped to $69 million in 2008, following the Supreme Court's decision in *Wisconsin Right to Life*, a precursor to *Citizens United* that struck down McCain-Feingold's rules regarding electoral ads that masquerade as "issue ads."

After Citizens United, dark money jumped to nearly $311 million in 2012, despite the Roberts court giving lip service to campaign finance disclosure.

The 2014 elections will exceed that total. And get ready for the 2016 Presidential elections.

This year "is showing that 2016 will be a mindboggling year for dark money," Maguire says. "There will be no incumbents in 2016, and on the Democratic side, probably a candidate open to using all forms of big money at their disposal."

The next Presidential election, says Maguire, "is going to make 2012 look quaint." ◆

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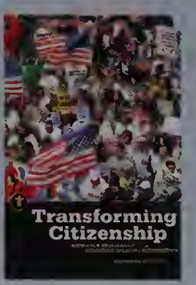

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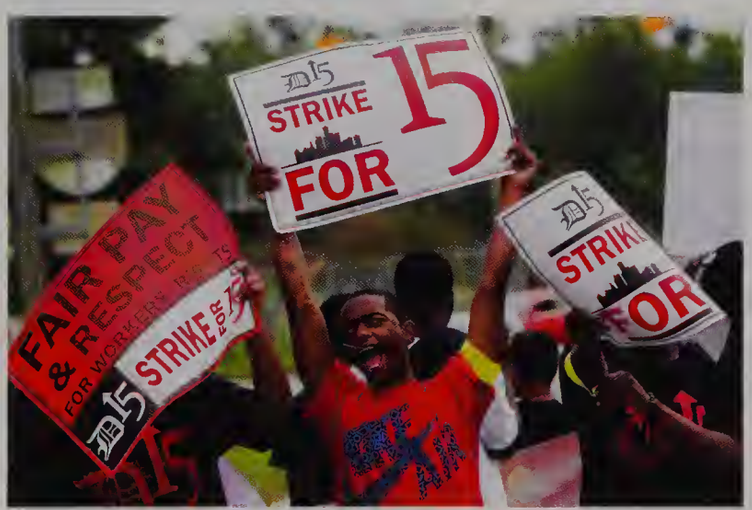
Lifting Wages at the Ballot Box

By Sarah Jaffe

This November, ballot measures are becoming the tool of choice for progressive activists, and low-wage workers' issues are on the agenda now in a way they haven't been in years.

Much of the credit goes to the workers at Walmart and fast-food restaurants around the country who've gone on strike after strike, demanding "$15 an hour and a union."

The first place to actually make $15 an hour the law was the town of SeaTac, Washington, which surrounds the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. A November 2013 ballot initiative passed by a narrow margin. Seven months later, the city of Seattle passed a law that will incrementally raise its minimum wage to $15 an hour by 2019.



About 150 protesters demanded a $15-an-hour minimum wage and a union as they marched around McDonald's on Stewart Avenue near Dort Highway on September 4 in Flint, Michigan. Flint Police arrested twenty-five protesters who were blocking the street. (AP Photo/The Flint Journal, Jake May)

While Congress and some state legislatures have stalled all remotely worker-friendly bills, organizers have been collecting signatures to put the issue in front of the voters themselves.

"We've seen states and cities taking action this year out of frustration with Congressional gridlock," says Jack Temple, a policy analyst with the National Employment Law Project, "and now we're seeing voters taking action out of frustration with state legislatures that have dropped the ball."

The states that have a higher minimum wage on the ballot this fall, Temple notes, are not ones usually considered progressive—Alaska, Arkansas, Nebraska, and South Dakota. In all of these, the minimum wage would increase to at least $8.50 an hour. The Alaska proposal would raise it to $8.75 by January 1, 2015, and to $9.75 the next year. And then it would permanently index its wage to inflation or to $1 more than the federal minimum. Not bad for so-called red states.

"Voters don't see this issue as a conservative or a progressive issue. They see it as a common sense issue," Temple says. "That's why when you actually take this issue to the voters, you see it pass each and every time

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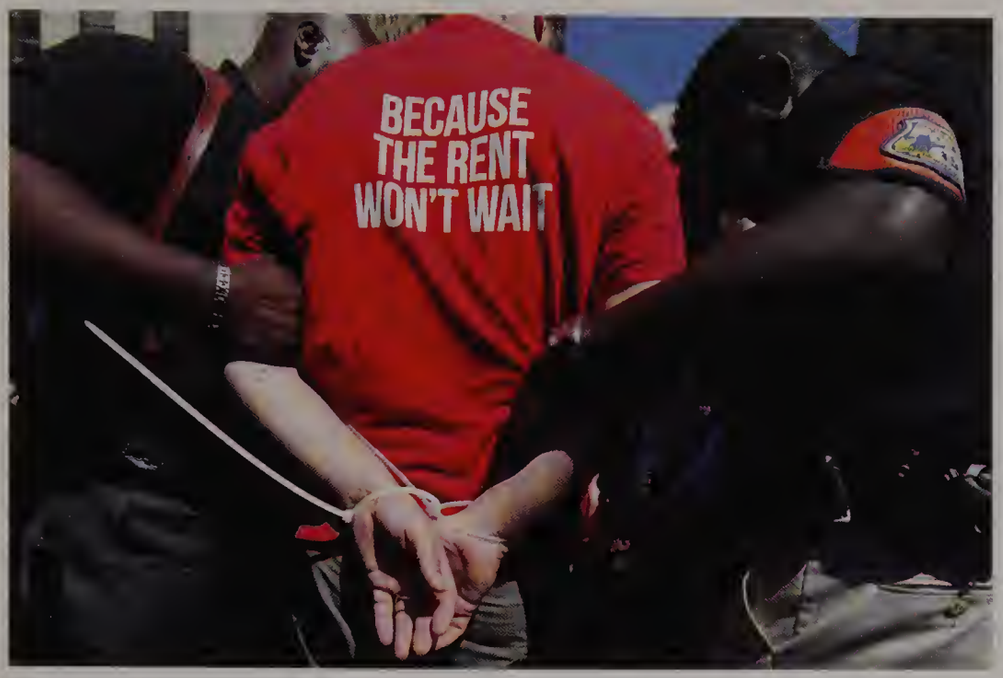
Sarah Jaffe is an independent journalist and co-host of Dissent magazine's "Belabored" podcast. You can follow her on Twitter @sarahjaffe and find her work at www.adifferentclass.com



A protester is detained during a demonstration to push fast-food chains to pay their employees at least $15 an hour, outside a McDonald's restaurant on September 4 in Philadelphia. (AP Photo/Matt Rourke)

with an overwhelming majority support."

In state after state, coalitions built of unions, community organizations, and, particularly in the more conservative states, interfaith organizations have moved to harness the energy created by the low-wage workers' movement.

Liberal states are also moving quickly. Massachusetts just passed what will be the highest statewide minimum wage in the country, $11 an hour, under pressure from, you guessed it, a ballot initiative campaign. There, the minimum wage was originally coupled with an initiative for paid sick days, but the state legislature took action in June and passed a bill, then signed into law by Governor Deval Patrick, that raises the wage incrementally to $11 by 2017. The Raise Up Massachusetts coalition is now focusing exclusively on the paid sick days measure, which will be Question 4 on the ballot in November.

"We think it's going to pass overwhelmingly," says Susan Tousignant, president of SEIU Local 509 in Massachusetts, part of the Raise Up coalition. "The time is right for this. I don't think the workers need to wait any longer."

The coalition—an impressively broad one, based in communities of color and spearheaded by volunteers—collected hundreds of thousands of signatures to get their measures on the ballot.

A statewide win in Massachusetts could be the linchpin for at least six states to take up paid sick days in 2015: Maryland, Minnesota, New Jersey, Oregon, Vermont, and Washington. Several cities, including Trenton, New Jersey, will likely have paid sick leave on the ballot this fall.

For Temple, the really exciting thing this November is the number of cities that are taking action to raise their own wages.

In the Bay Area, San Franciscans will have a chance to vote on a $15 an hour minimum wage.

In Oakland, a $12.25 minimum wage is on the ballot in a joint measure that would also give employees access to paid sick days—at least five days for those who work for smaller businesses, and up to nine days for employees of larger businesses. (San Francisco already has paid sick days, the result of a 2006 ballot initiative.)

San Francisco has been a "beacon," says Shaw San Liu, the lead organizer at the Tenant Worker Center of the Chinese Progressive Association there. "As organizers, it's really exciting to see what you can do in one place."

Liu credits the fast-food movement and what she calls a "shift in the political imagination on a broader level" for propelling them to try for $15 in San Francisco. By putting forward its own measure, the Coalition for a Fair Economy, which includes Liu's group, the SEIU Local 1021, and many others managed to get San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee to come to the table and devise a compromise plan, which will be on the ballot in November. It would raise the minimum wage to $15 by 2018 and avoids some of the loopholes around tips and "training" wages for younger workers that made it into Seattle's law.

Raising the minimum wage is a popular demand.

A CNNMoney poll found that 71 percent of Americans favor an increase, including 54 percent of Republicans. The unwillingness of some elected officials to give people what they want, Temple says, is due to the outsize influence that big corporations have on politics.

The National Restaurant Association lobbies extensively against increasing the minimum wage, and legislative members of the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) has helped push a series of laws to preemptively ban cities and counties from establishing a right to paid sick time. As political scientists Martin Gilens and Benjamin Page point out in their recent study of policy outcomes over a period of more than twenty years, "economic elites" tend to see their preferred policy goals become law, while average people have very little influence.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce and other business representatives are trying to throw their weight around in San Diego. They are petitioning for a measure on a minimum wage increase and paid sick days that would go on the ballot in June of 2016 to overturn the city council's recent passage of an ordinance lifting the minimum wage to $11.50 an hour by January 2017 and granting workers five days of paid sick leave.

"They claim that they're trying to let the voters decide when really what they're trying to do is take away a win," says Ellen Bravo, executive director of Family Values @ Work, a network of state coalitions working for paid sick days and paid family leave.

It's not just on workplace issues that organized people are confronting big business this fall.

In Oregon, for example, activists collected 155,000 signatures to get a measure on the ballot that would require genetically modified foods to come with a GMO warning label.

"We have a right to know important information about the food we eat and feed our families—such as sugar and sodium levels, whether flavors are natural or artificial, and if fish is wild or farm raised," says the initiative drafted by the Oregon Right to Know campaign. "We should also have the right to choose whether we want to buy and eat genetically modified (GMO) food, just like sixty-four other countries already do."

But it won't be easy. As Joel Connelly at the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* reports, big agribusiness spent more than $47 million to defeat such a measure in California in 2012, and at least $24 million on beating a similar one in Washington last year.

Though not all ballot measures are progressive by a long shot—November will also see initiatives that would make a fetus a person and abolish an elected board of education—the momentum appears to be on the side of working people.

"If we just left it up to politicians and elected officials to bring stakeholders together and come up with some kind of measure," Liu says, "we would never have won any of the stuff we won." ◆

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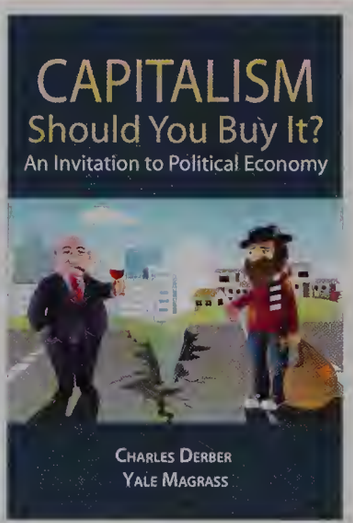

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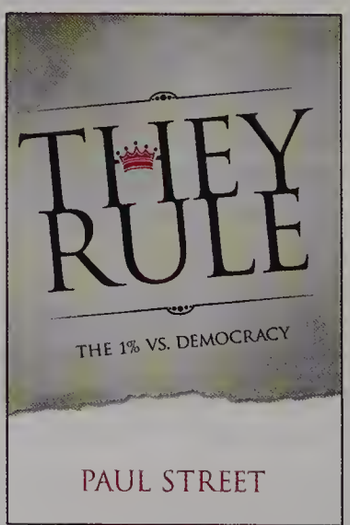

Our Coal, Our Responsibility

By Rick Bass

In the old days, our country could be counted on for making a stand, for doing the hard, if not always convenient, thing. Or that was the myth I was raised on. Maybe it wasn't true. It doesn't really matter: If it wasn't true, it should have been.

Once upon a time, there were certain countries we would not do business with, certain products we would not sell: weapons, poisons, that kind of thing. The fact that another country might proceed with those lucrative arms sales, or chemical sales, or what-have-you, did not dissuade us; we used not to subscribe to the logic that "Everybody else is doing it," or, "If we don't sell it to them, someone else will." We stood our ground. And we tried to discourage these other countries from making those sales. You could say that we were a leader among nations. Or so the myth went.

But now we are exporting vast volumes of dirty toxic coal—coal too dirty to foist upon our own population. Open boxcars of the stuff—more than a million tons of it at a whack—trundle and squeak and clank and groan and hiss through Montana towns and villages. The open-car rail export of these anachronistic exhumations, the guts of old anaerobic swamps, is disrupting the equanimity of our commerce and communities.

It is turning Montana into an industrial export corridor, a colony for the international energy companies once again, and that is a matter of deep concern to those of us who have chosen to make our homes in Montana for the exact opposite reasons.

We live here under the belief that our Constitution assures us and guarantees us clean air and clean water all the time, not merely when there is no one willing to pay the Treasury to take these rights away. Many thousands of times we have watched these cars pass by with the mercury dust swirling in the wind, accumulating like a silent fuse of toxicity in every town, every city. A million tons, two million tons. Even if but 3 percent of the volume is lost in waste and wind and rain spillage, this is a steadily accruing poison being injected into our communities and ecosystems.

This is coal that our government has said will harm us—coal our government has said we cannot use in this country, and yet we are disseminating it. It's coal that our government is now saying can be used only by people whose health and happiness are of no concern to us. It's saying that we can harm others and have no responsibility, no accountability, moral or otherwise, and that there can be profit in such actions.

Rick Bass is the author of thirty-one books of fiction and nonfiction, and lives in northwest Montana, where he is a board member of the Yaak Valley Forest Council (www.yaakvalley.org).

Open boxcars of dirty coal trundle and squeak and clank and groan and hiss through Montana towns and villages.

If protesting these out-of-control, unmonitored coal shipments is against the law then I do not want to be on the side of that law. I do not accept a law that willfully and directly hurts others, through the sale and export of this poisonous product, and that hurts all of us, and the wild country we love, through the acceleration of global warming. I do not support this profit-mongering of those who would sell Montana at any price.

This is Montana's coal. This is our coal. This is our responsibility.

This is not the decision to be passed off to some distant king or dictator, or to fate. We decide what to do with this coal.

This is our coal. This is our responsibility.

Either we support what is happening or we oppose it.

This is our coal. We are doing this.

Every time we look out and watch another rail car bound for Japan, we are doing this. Doing this to people we do not know, have not met, will never meet.

But they are people. We are doing this to them. For profit.

We used not to be this way. Or so we would like to believe. ◆

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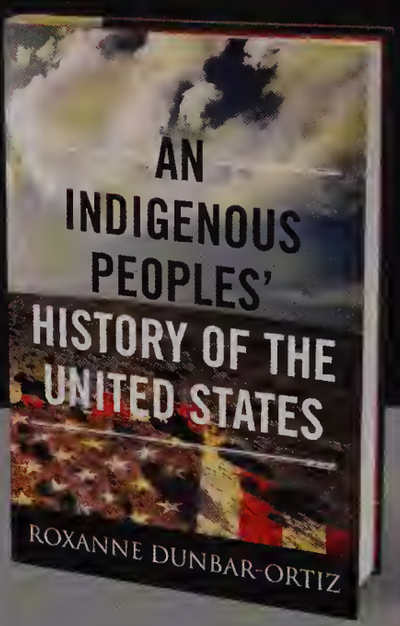

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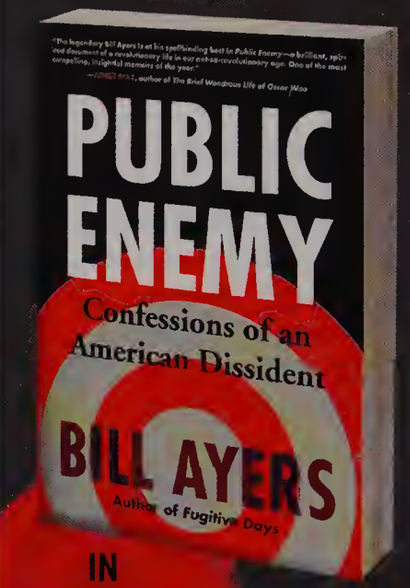

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IGNITING HEARTS AND MINDS

With the Kurds in Iraq

By Reese Erlich

Fauzi Ali, a Yazidi, had given birth just two days earlier when she walked through the Sinjar mountains, crossed briefly into Syria, and then went into Iraqi Kurdistan, where relief agencies have set up camps.

"ISIS attacked our village and killed people, even children," she says. "They took some of the women with them. We were afraid for our lives and left."

PHOTO BY REESE ERLICH

Veteran foreign correspondent Reese Erlich's most recent book is Inside Syria: the Backstory of Their Civil War and What the World Can Expect, *Prometheus Books, foreword by Noam Chomsky.*

When ISIS and its Sunni allies launched their offensive in June, the Iraqi Army dissolved in many parts of the country. Najmaldin Karim, governor of the northern province of Kirkuk, recalls a morning meeting he had with the army's regional commander right before the assault, who said his troops were ready to battle ISIS.

"By four in the afternoon, they were all gone," said Karim. The next day, "we helped him to go back to Baghdad."

President Obama ordered U.S. airstrikes against ISIS, purportedly to protect the Yazidis and defend the Kurdish regional government in Iraq. Even after the Yazidi crisis ended, however, the bombing continued amidst domestic and international calls to expand the war. As with all recent U.S. military interventions, getting in will be much easier than getting out.

After the ISIS offensive and the collapse of the army, the Kurdish government seized the oil-rich city of Kirkuk and other territory. It expanded its areas of control by 40 percent. Kurdish President Masoud Barzani then announced plans for referenda, in which Kurds would undoubtedly have voted for an independent Kurdistan.

But then the Kurds ran into a stark reality. When the much-heralded Kurdish military, known as the peshmerga, was confronted with the ISIS offensive in August, the Kurds retreated. They were outgunned, and, in some cases, faced attacks from local Sunnis.

"They were overextended," admits Richard Nabb, a former U.S. Army colonel and now an oil company executive living in Erbil. "The ISIS guys are fairly well organized and fairly disciplined. They took advantage of that."

Kurdish institutions, including the peshmerga, are infamous for corruption. Politicians skim money intended for the peshmerga, and soldiers must buy their own light arms and ammunition. The peshmerga most often don't have flak vests or even helmets.

The peshmerga, like every other institution in the Kurdish government, is split between the two dominant political parties. The Kurdish Democratic Party and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan each control its own peshmerga, with their own funding and command structure. They have to negotiate with each other on the battlefield.

Due to the weaknesses of the Iraqi army and peshmerga, the Obama Administration decided to launch air strikes in August, at least temporarily slowing the ISIS offensive. By then, ISIS had advanced to within thirty miles of Kirkuk, the heartland of oil in northern Iraq.

In 1927, oil was discovered in Kirkuk, the first fields in the Arab world. The oil was owned by British, French, and American oil companies, part of the spoils of World War I. Today a visitor sees the same well flaring gas high into the sky much as it did in the 1930s.

Until this year, Kirkuk was formally controlled by Baghdad, and oil flowed through a pipeline it maintained. But in March, ISIS sabotaged part of the pipeline, and all but a small amount of oil production stopped. Once the peshmerga established Kurdish control of Kirkuk this summer, local wells pumped about 25,000 barrels per day north to a newly constructed Kurdish pipeline going to Turkey.

Some U.S. oil companies evacuated their personnel from the Kurdish region during the ISIS attacks, but in general, they are delighted with the recent turn of events. The Kurdish government is far more friendly to big oil than Baghdad, and the multinationals are making a bundle.

Under the Bush Administration's original plan in 2003, Iraqi oil revenue would have paid the costs of the U.S. occupation. But that scheme quickly fell apart in the face of strong Iraqi objections and low oil production. Later, the United States pushed for passage of a national oil law that would have allowed multinationals to develop new oil fields, which was opposed by those in Baghdad who wanted to keep that right for the national oil company. The Iraqi Parliament refused to pass the law.

The core issue is who gets the oil profits. The Oil Ministry in Baghdad would sign only service agreements in which the oil companies received a flat 5 percent fee for every barrel produced. The multinationals were never happy with those agreements because of the relatively low profit margin. Baghdad also maintained that all oil produced in the country, including any from the Kurdish region, should be controlled by the central government. In return, Baghdad paid the Kurdish government 17 percent of the national budget, mostly money from oil profits.

The Kurdish government maintains, however, that it can sign its own contracts, build its own facilities, and export its oil via a newly built pipeline to Turkey. Over the past ten years, the government lured oil

corporations by signing production-sharing agreements. Oil companies front the money for exploration, and if the oil gushes, they receive about 18 percent ownership.

Oil company executive Nabb says oil corporations prefer such agreements although they involve more risk. "You get good money if you hit," he says.

In addition, foreign companies investing in the Kurdish region, including oil corporations, pay no taxes for the first ten years of operation and can import items without customs taxes, provisions that Nabb calls "very generous."

Over the past few years, Chevron and ExxonMobil canceled their contracts with Baghdad and moved to Erbil. Kurdish officials say Kurdistan has the ninth-largest oil reserves in the world. The participation of major oil companies gives the Kurdish government greater clout in Washington to promote autonomy and eventually declare independence.

Nabb and his corporate allies believe the United States should provide stronger support to the Kurdish government. "We wanted, quite frankly, to develop American business interests here that would trump what we all believed was bad U.S. policy," he says.

Now that policy is very much in flux. For the moment, the Obama Administration argues that arming the peshmerga, combined with U.S. air strikes, will be sufficient to stop ISIS. That might work in areas with large Kurdish populations. But the peshmerga can't hold Mosul or other Sunni Arab areas because the local populations would reject Kurdish rule. The Iraqi army seems ill equipped to defeat ISIS, and Iraqi government institutions are too weak and corrupt to keep ISIS from returning.

PHOTOS BY REESE ERLICH

A failure to defeat ISIS by air will increase domestic pressure from Democratic and Republican hawks to step up air strikes, send more advisers, and increase the number of American GIs on the ground, although they probably won't be called "combat troops." Pressure from the oil companies will make the hawks stronger.

I ask a high-ranking U.S. diplomat, who declines to use his name, whether the Iraqi army could hold Sunni Arab areas without participation of U.S. troops.

He pauses for a very long time. Then he shrugs his shoulders and doesn't answer. ◆

Michael Eric Dyson

PHOTO COURTESY MICHAEL ERIC DYSON

By David A. Love

Michael Eric Dyson is a professor of sociology at Georgetown University and a political analyst for MSNBC. A prolific writer, he is the author of sixteen books, including Holler If You Hear Me, Is Bill Cosby Right? *and* I May Not Get There with You: The True Martin Luther King Jr. *He was the host of* The Michael Eric Dyson Show, *which was broadcast from WEAA, the radio station of Morgan State University in Baltimore from 2009 to 2011.*

David A. Love is a freelance writer and human rights activist based in Philadelphia.

A Detroit native and a Princeton-educated scholar and theologian, Dyson is among America's most influential thinkers. Known for the forcefulness and agility with which he analyzes social phenomena, race, politics, and culture, Dyson is a black public intellectual whose scholarship is sophisticated yet grounded and accessible. He is a community scholar whose work seamlessly traverses the contours of the civil rights movement and the hip-hop and millennial generations.

With an active on-air presence at MSNBC, Dyson is part of an effort that is changing the look and feel of cable news. The network leads the cable news market among African American viewership, and showcases diverse anchors and contributors including Dyson. He pronounces scathing, even devastating critiques that arouse smiles in his viewing audience.

I caught up with Dyson by phone at the end of August, right after he had participated in a panel discussion of scholars at Georgetown that reflected on the events surrounding the shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri.

Q: What are your thoughts on the tragic events in Ferguson?

Michael Eric Dyson: An epic tide of grief washed over black America, and indeed engulfed the rest of the nation in flames of agony, protest, resistance, and rage. And the profound character of that grief resides in the fact that this is a problem that has been fairly persistent in many urban black centers across this nation for decades. And if the truth is told, Ferguson exploded long before it finally erupted in flames of anguish after the killing of Michael Brown because of the desperate poverty that's there: The children of 68 percent of the members of that community qualify for free lunches. Twenty-two percent of the people live below poverty. It's a 67 percent black city, presided over by a white mayor and a white prosecutor, with a white governor.

And so there's a sense of being under occupation in that desolate black colony by a regime of elite whites who clearly have little empathy for, or understanding of, the population whose destiny they hold in their hands. Ferguson was the revelation, like Katrina a decade before, of the persistent problems of poverty concentrated in a black urban arena, with the most dangerous and destructive consequences.

And then when you add to that the fact of police brutality, police aggression, police violence, police surveillance, police scrutiny, police intimidation, and police terror, you've got the makings of an unavoidable urban drama whose chaos is measured not simply in the outrage of the people at their treatment but in the desperate fashion in which they continued to protest, even in the face of tear gas and the other accoutrements of war that were visited on them.

We saw the militarization of the police department, and we saw the training of weapons of warfare on vulnerable, unarmed, mostly black and brown citizens. We saw the ineffectiveness of the local leaders there—the mayor was basically silent throughout the process, and only said a few words that were even remotely enlightening or helpful. The prosecutor has been known to be very comfortable and cozy with the police department, and the governor has basically been an absentee landlord and caretaker of this particularly desperate population of people.

So we saw black people just say we're tired of being shot down in the street, mowed down like grass, and treated like we're less than animals—because many of our American citizens treat their animals better than they treat black people.

Q: Where is all this heading?

Dyson: The turning point here is that the uprisings in the aftermath of Michael Brown's killing suggest that justice has to be done, and that we'll pay attention to these situations across the nation.

It means black people can't be treated like nonhuman beings. It takes so long for us to get autopsy reports. It takes so long for us to get police reports. It takes so long for us to get any information that might dribble out of either the prosecutor's office or the police department.

"An epic tide of grief washed over black America, and indeed engulfed the rest of the nation in flames of agony, protest, resistance, and rage."

Q: What do we need to do now?

Dyson: We need to ratchet up our arguments and our disgust at what's going on in these streets, and for black people everywhere to get mobilized. For instance, right there in Ferguson, you know only about 12 percent of people showed up at the polls the last election, so there's no reason that they shouldn't have a person of color at the helm of that city who respects them and who recognizes their humanity. As for the D.A. and prosecutor—those offices should be shaped by black voters that are highly motivated to have their perspectives and their humanity registered and represented.

It's got to be a turning point to politically organize people, it's got to be a turning point in the refusal any longer to be silent. It's got to be a turning point in communicating a message to broader white America, through the thick haze of its unspoken, white privilege that there is something wrong going on here, and it's going to have a negative effect upon the entire society. And until white privilege is checked, and until aggression against black people is checked, then we're going to have a repeat of the same thing. But I think enough people have been politicized, their eyes opened, their outrage sparked and their disgust tapped, that this may indeed be a critical moment in a burgeoning national movement that will try to put an end to all this madness.

Q: Lately, I have heard of a number of people who argue that we should instead be addressing "black-on-black" crime.

Dyson: It is a ludicrous argument for the following reasons: First of all, black people do talk about black-on-black crime endlessly. All the time. People kill where they live. If you want integrated killings you have to have integrated communities. People don't get really mobile to commit murders. They usually kill in the neighborhood where they live, or the vicinity where they travel. And the demobilization of black people means that they are stuck in poor neighborhoods where they do most of their mayhem.

Black people are upset with black-on-black crime. But here's the difference: People who kill other black people go to jail. They actually get arrested, and they get convicted at a far higher rate than when a white person kills a black person. If you go to churches on Sunday morning, black people are always talking about responsibility, moral self-policing, ethical self-criticism, and challenging ourselves to stop the hate, end the violence, and beat those weapons into plowshares. Where have people been? The notion that black folk don't care about black-on-black crime is an unjustified trope, it's a meme, and it's a dishonorable untruth that is touted by so many people.

"These folk cite black-on-black crime to exempt themselves from moral scrutiny."

What's also interesting is that most of these folk who are talking about that kind of crime don't necessarily focus on the suffering of black people at the hands of other black people. They simply want to exempt themselves from moral scrutiny and ethical critique. They're not citing those black-on-black crime numbers because they're so invested in those black communities that are being pummeled by criminals and being harassed by unlawful behavior. They ain't got that kind of interest; they are trying to prove a point.

They ain't trying to cite these cases because they are truly interested in justice for black people. They just don't want to have the finger pointed at them.

Q: What is your assessment of President Obama's tenure, and particularly his response to the recent events in Ferguson?

Dyson: He's hardly doing enough. I don't know if you saw my op-ed in *The Washington Post*, where I gently and lovingly, but firmly, took him to task for his failure to provide leadership on this issue. You know, black people have been so prideful of the President—and so have I—but that pride has prevented them from understanding how he has failed. Pride has precluded them from being openly and publicly critical of anything that he has done. Now I get that, because the rightwing obstructionists have been so hateful and so nasty toward the President that black people are extremely defensive about any small criticism of him. The haters are so virulent that it makes reasonable conversation about President Obama in a logical context nearly impossible. And other Presidents have been cut slack in a number of ways on a number of issues, so why not cut Obama slack because he's the first black President? I get that reasoning, and, to a certain degree, I understand when

black people apply it in cases where the President has spoken up and been attacked by the right wing. In these instances black solidarity closes around him, and black protectionism becomes his shield and armor. I get all of that.

The problem is we have so encouraged the President with our overwhelming support that we failed to leverage our moral authority to demand of him the right things to do in a time of crisis. We have surrendered the pull and advantage we have. We have no bargaining power with the President because we've already proved that we love him so much that there's nothing he can do that would ultimately alienate him from us. I don't care how good a person you are, when you have that kind of knowledge, your tendency to exploit it is high, because you know there will be no pushback should you step out of line and behave irresponsibly.

The best of us would find that hard to resist, and the President is no different. But the stakes are high, and the kinds of excuses that have been made for the President are quite intriguing because Obama has gained praise from white America—and a bunch of "amens" in black America—by giving black people lectures about responsibility, and telling us to make no excuses. He goes to Morehouse College to give a commencement address, but basically treats those kids as if they are in detention, or somehow messed up, when they are really college graduates. And he's telling them not to make any excuses, when obviously they haven't made excuses because they're graduating. He tells them they'll have to earn what they get, when the only person who didn't earn what he got that day was President Obama, who got an honorary degree. Obama also upbraided the Morehouse graduates by telling them that nobody was going to care about their cries of racism, and yet when he went to Barnard College, a predominantly white female college associated with Columbia University, he didn't dare tell them that nobody was interested in their cries of sexism.

President Obama has chided us, he has challenged us, but he hasn't truly represented us—at least not with the same vigor he's publicly scolded us. And his silence is hurtful because he has the voice, amplified by his office, to tell an acceptable version of the truth to white America. I say acceptable because there are ways he can tell the truth to white America—not lie, not dissemble, not be disingenuous, not be dishonest, not deflect the truth, or hide, or hem or haw, but tell the truth in a straightforward fashion without appearing to attack white America. We don't expect him to attack white people like he occasionally attacks black folk, but we do expect him to attack the problems of the broader society: the police brutality, the police aggression, the mistreatment of black people, and the constant dehumanization of black life.

Every President before Obama has been forced to respond to the issue of race. President Obama says he wants to be treated like all other Presidents. Well, then, you can't be exempt from the call of responsibility to race. You can't have it both ways. What we get is, "I'm the first black President, and my personal discomfort with discussing race in public has made me mute." And I think that's problematic.

President Obama's personal discomfort in talking about race shouldn't keep him from using his bully pulpit to wrestle in public with one of the most damning features of the American compact. It still roils beneath the surface, erupts above ground into flames, and consumes populations with unforgiving intensity. The President has to speak up because he's the President, not because he's a black man. We'd hoped being a black man would give him extra motivation, but at least do the minimum required of a President: Speak intelligently in the midst of a crisis with the authority of the office to support vulnerable citizens who are being mistreated, especially by representatives of the state like the police. President Obama has a moral obligation to speak up, and I see my role as a loving critic to challenge him to use his political capital for the black folk who have overwhelmingly supported and loved him.

Q: Your presence on MSNBC has really brought a new flavor to cable news. I'm curious about your assessment of the network. Do you feel that it has been easy to get progressive ideas out there through the network?

Dyson: It's been a wonder and a joy to be a part of the MSNBC family. In that family, there are many stripes of progressivism, from strong liberal to hard left, but all of us are committed to the principle that we must raise our voices and articulate our truths with a recognition that Fox News commands such a large swath of the political consciousness of this nation. And we must provide a countervailing force. We must provide a sweet breeze to the ill wind that blows from their precincts.

MSNBC has done yeoman's work when it comes to representing beliefs that have been marginalized in other

quarters of the culture. Phil Griffin, who runs MSNBC, has done a great job of assembling a collage of colors, a colloquy of voices, to create a brilliant political network that makes a difference in the lives of millions of ordinary citizens in this country and around the world. It is not enough to analyze the world, though that's a vitally important project in its own right. It's also important to provide correct analysis for uplifting action. MSNBC is an inspiration in that effort, and I'm just glad to be part of the number. ◆

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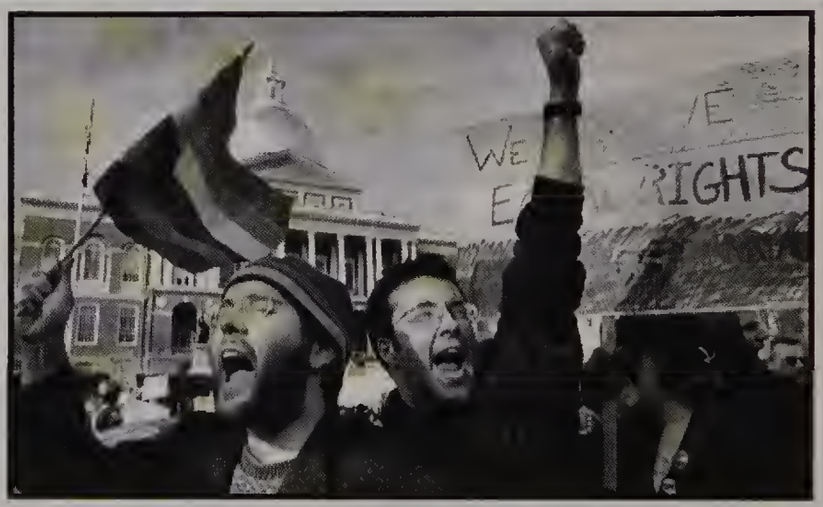

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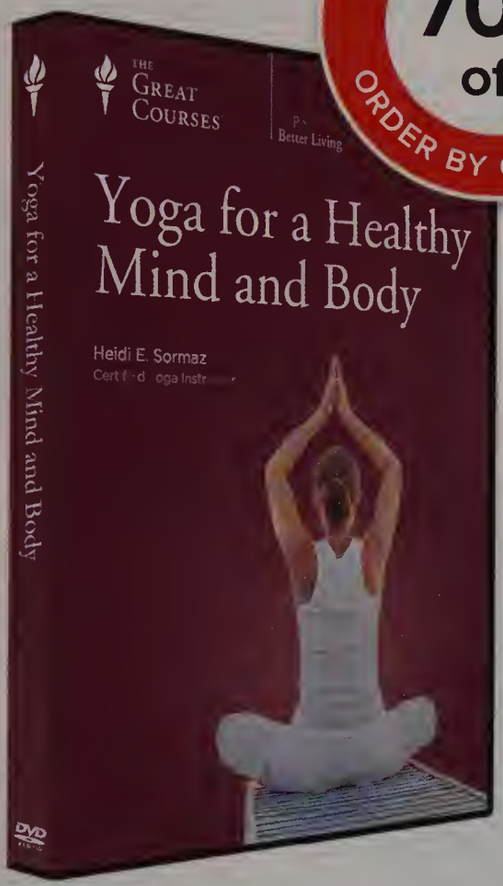

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Smug Shots

Knew he shouldn't. Couldn't help himself. I'm talking about the sneering leer peering out of Rick Perry's mug shot. Or to be more precise, his smug shot. In the photo released by the Austin Police Department, the Texas governor was grinning like a Cheshire cat that just cleaned out the canary department at a PetSmart.

Because he vetoed the budget of the Travis County district attorney's whole agency when she refused to resign following a drunken driving conviction, Perry was indicted on two federal felony counts relating to abuse of power. Which, for politicians, is real similar to being accused of breathing through their mouth. Or wearing tasselled loafers. The loyal opposition is programmed to consider all uses of power abusive, a fact extensively covered in every freshman orientation pamphlet.

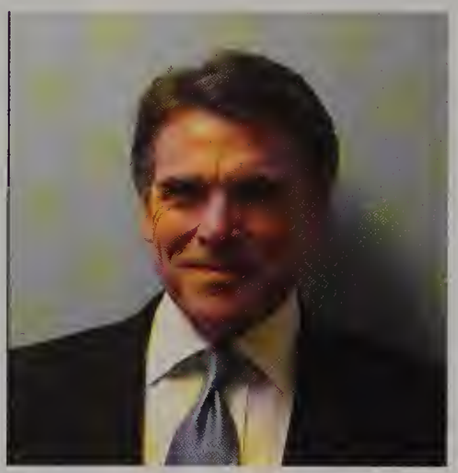
The three reasons the longest-serving governor in Lone Star history was smirking are obvious.

One: There's a better chance of being struck by lightning while holding Charlize Theron's purse stuffed with winning Powerball tickets than being convicted.

Two: He will wear these charges as a loud red badge of partisan courage, rekindling previously foundering Presidential aspirations.

As for the third thing . . . he, unh, well, unh, he'll have to get back to you. Ooops.

The guy is delighted he's being indicted. Further proof that today any and all publicity is good publicity. Andy Warhol's future has arrived and taken over the conference room. Famous for fifteen



minutes. That's the goal. Doesn't even have to be fifteen minutes. Thirty seconds will do.

You don't have to be talented or accomplished or good looking or even credible. Just shoot your name and face out there. Get on television. Even basic cable. Do whatever it takes to force people to talk about you—by hook or by crook or by booking photo.

With seven series and a spate of spin-offs, the Bravo Network has practically given up on narrative programming, morphing into the Real Housewives Channel or The Women Be Fighting and Stuff Network.

The Weather Channel has a new reality show called *Fat Guys in the Woods*, which infringes on absolutely no fairness in advertising doctrines. They're fat. They're guys. They're in the woods. Anybody can be a star.

We're all one viral post away from the Big Time, and the virus is pandemic.

Arianna Huffington sold her website to AOL for $315 million based on the business model of rounding up scores of scripting serfs who write for free.

Performing artists are required to pay the cover charge for the open mikes where they sweat and toil to be discovered. Pay to play is here to stay.

The NFL is attempting to harness these ambitions by charging musical acts to perform at the Super Bowl halftime show. The three finalists, Katy Perry, Coldplay, and Rihanna, have each been asked to pony up for the privilege, or to kick back a slice of their post-show concert tour.

What's next? Will the NFL request their logo be carved into the haircut of the bass player? Who's going to argue? It's the bass player, for crum's sake.

For ultimate monetization, ownership of the halftime show could be thrown open to the highest bidder. Easy to imagine Rick Perry outbidding everyone, while still featuring Katy Perry as the entertainment. Call it the Perry-a-Thon. But then, of course, the terrorists win. ◆

Will Durst is an award-winning, nationally acclaimed political comic. Go to willdurst.com to find out more about the new documentary film "3 Still Standing," and a calendar guide to personal appearances, including his new one-man show "BoomeRaging: From LSD to OMG."

A New Day Dawns for NBA Players

For the last several years, the weakest union in professional sports has been the one representing the players of the National Basketball Association. Bereft of leadership since the 2013 ouster of Executive Director Billy Hunter, players have seen the values of franchises skyrocket while their own collective bargaining rights and voice in the sport crumbled.

When recordings surfaced of Los Angeles Clippers owner Donald Sterling making a series of racist rants, the rudderless players were compelled, amidst the 2014 playoffs, to draft the former player and current mayor of Sacramento, the avowedly anti-union Kevin Johnson, to be their spokesperson. Yes, the husband of anti-union avatar Michelle Rhee was, for a very tragic moment in the history of sports unionism, in charge of the National Basketball Players Association. Sure enough, when the smoke had cleared, Sterling walked away with a $2 billion payday, his wife, Shelly, retained a ceremonial role with the team, and nothing had been done about the fact that the notorious slumlord had been coddled by the NBA for more than three decades.

But a new day is dawning. Finally, at long last, the players have elected an executive director for their union, a surprising choice, not merely because this leader is more than a foot shorter than the average person in the National Basketball Players Association. The choice of this leader was shocking because this leader is a she. Her name is Michele Roberts, and she is more than just the first woman to head a professional sports union. She has become, without question, the most powerful woman in professional sports.

(SKADDEN, ARPS, SLATE, MEAGHER & FLOM LLP)

Very few "insiders" thought Roberts, a high-powered D.C. attorney, had a chance to win this position. The players, they believed, were simply too sexist to accept female leadership. Yet she won overwhelmingly. According to a *New York Times* profile, here is how she addressed the fact that she was a woman fighting to lead an all-male union in a high-testosterone sport:

"My past," she told the room, "is littered with the bones of men who were foolish enough to think I was someone they could sleep on."

Damn!

As much as that wowed the player representatives in the room, my own sources say that it was her plan to proactively build a leadership team to regain control of what has been an aimless operation that truly won her majority support.

She is not "a one-person Superman," Roberts said.

"We are going to have a team, a very strong team, what I call a team of gladiators," she added. "It's a new day."

Tops on her list will be opting out of the current collective bargaining agreement in two years. The owners have extracted a stunning amount of wealth from the players over the last decade. There is a line of plutocrats looking to buy NBA teams, partly because the position of labor is so dramatically restricted.

"They've got their union back, and I'm going to make sure that they are empowered to take their union exactly where they want their union to go," Roberts said.

Roberts will be judged not on her gender but on her ability to lead her team of gladiators to victory.◆

Dave Zirin is the host of Sirius XM Radio's popular weekly show, Edge of Sports Radio, *and the sports editor for* The Nation *magazine. His latest book is* Brazil's Dance with the Devil.

POEM

The Recording Angel

The Recording Angel sat behind a big black desk
consulting his little notebook.
Grey sky outside. His office walls were grey.
His sideburns (were they little horns?) were grey.
I was late in telling him the news
that you were dead.
The angel pursed his lips and shook his head.

"You should have told me sooner,"
he said. I knew I should have.
My mouth was dry, my tongue
sluggish, heavy knowledge
was weighing down my heart.
My excuse—not that I told the angel—
was that even while he and I had sat there

fiddling with the complicated schedule—
the aide, the back-up aide, the days, the rain date
(was this all one big picnic?),
you had preempted us,
had slyly found the door
and without hesitating kicked it open,
had raced on out before us and escaped.

—Rachel Hadas

Rachel Hadas is Board of Governors Professor of English at the Newark campus of Rutgers University. Her most recent books are a memoir, Strange Relation *(Paul Dry Books, 2011), and a book of poems,* The Golden Road *(Northwestern University Press, 2012).*

Naomi Klein's Climate Manifesto

This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate
By Naomi Klein
Simon & Schuster, $30. 566 pages.

Here is the long-awaited book on climate change by one of the leading lights of the left. Naomi Klein, author of *The Shock Doctrine* (my pick for the most important book of the last decade), is back with another urgent work.

In *This Changes Everything*, she not only synthesizes the science on global climate change in accessible language and highlights the horrific hazards. She also gets right to the roots of the crisis, and then tells us what needs to be done about it.

This book is no downer, though, for she has her ear to the ground, and she has picked up on all the rumblings at the grassroots—all the little and not-so-little acts of resistance and regeneration that offer hope in the here and now.

She argues that the climate crisis represents a "historic opportunity" to change the world for the better. It "could become a galvanizing force for humanity, leaving us all not just safer from extreme weather, but with societies that are safer and fairer in all kinds of other ways as well."

And for the left, she argues, it's practically a godsend.

"It could be the best argument progressives ever had," she writes, "to demand the rebuilding and reviving of local economies; to block harmful free trade deals and rewrite old ones; to invest in starving public infrastructure like mass transit and affordable housing; to take back ownership of essential services like energy and water; to remake our sick agricultural system into something much healthier; to open borders to migrants whose displacement is linked to climate impacts; to finally respect indigenous land rights—all of which would help to end grotesque levels of inequality within our nations and between them."

She pins much of the crisis on runaway capitalism.

"We have not done the things that are necessary to lower emissions because those things fundamentally conflict with deregulated capitalism," she writes. "We are stuck because the actions that would give us the best chance of averting catastrophe...are extremely threatening to an elite minority that has a stranglehold over our economy, our political process, and most of our major media outlets."

Matthew Rothschild is the senior editor of The Progressive.

She pinpoints the media's complicity, noting that even as the climate crisis has accelerated, the coverage has diminished.

"In 2007, the three major U.S. networks—CBS, NBC, and ABC—ran 147 stories on climate change," she writes. "In 2011, the networks ran just 14 stories on the subject."

Often in the book, she laments "the bad timing" that we've got: This latest version of capitalism, and the ideology that justifies it, has unfortunately arrived at the same time as the climate crisis.

"Market fundamentalism has," she writes, "from the very first moments, systematically sabotaged our collective response to climate change, a threat that came knocking just as the ideology was reaching its zenith."

Once you deregulate corporations and defund and privatize the public sector, you elevate the folks that are causing the problem while tying the hands of those who are in the best position to do something about it.

She digs deeper. It's not just this version of capitalism that is the source of the problem. It's "the fundamental imperative at the heart of our economic model: grow or die," she writes. And it's also what she calls the "extractivist mentality"—the biblical idea that humans have dominion over the Earth, that it is ours to exploit.

"The climate crisis challenges not only capitalism, but the underlying civilizational narratives," she writes.

For the left and the environmental movement, Klein offers several criticisms.

First, we shouldn't shy away from the ideological fight. "The green movement's mantra that climate is not about left and right but 'right and wrong' has gotten us nowhere," she says.

Second, she says several of the Big Green groups have compromised themselves hopelessly. The two she criticizes the most are the Nature Conservancy and the Environmental Defense Fund. The Nature Conservancy actually operates an oil well on land it said it was protecting for the endangered Attwater's prairie chicken, which is

"Market fundamentalism has systematically sabotaged our collective response to climate change."

no longer there. And the Environmental Defense Fund has made alliances with oil and gas companies and has vigorously promoted cap-and-trade policies.

She also criticizes environmental groups for taking money either directly or indirectly from the very polluters themselves.

"Most big conservation groups did not have policies prohibiting them from investing their endowments in fossil fuel companies," she writes. "The hypocrisy is staggering."

Third, she criticizes lifestyle environmentalists. It's not enough, she writes, to "meditate and shop at farmers' markets and stop driving—but forget trying to actually change the systems that are making the crisis inevitable because that's too much 'bad energy' and it will never work."

On the flip side, she has begrudgingly come around to the view that protest itself is insufficient.

"Saying no is not enough," she writes. "If opposition movements are to do more than burn bright and then burn out, they will need a comprehensive vision for what should emerge in the place of our failing system, as well as serious political strategies for how to achieve these goals."

In an apparent reference to the Occupy movement, which she praises in several places, especially for its work after Hurricane Sandy, Klein acknowledges her impatience. "The fetish for structurelessness, the rebellion against any kind of institutionalization," she warns, "is not a luxury today's transformative movements can afford."

So where does she find hope? All over the place, actually.

"This is a movement of many movements," she

writes, and "it is beginning to shake the fossil fuel industry to the core."

She applauds the work of the college divestment movement, spearheaded by Bill McKibben and 350.org (she sits on the board of that group).

She hails the resistance to new mining projects, wherever they arise. These activists are "the new climate warriors," she says in a chapter entitled "Blockadia."

"Resistance to high-risk extreme extraction is building a global, grassroots, and broad-based network," she writes. "It is primarily driven by a desire for a deeper form of democracy, one that provides communities with real control over those resources that are most critical to collective survival—the health of the water, air, and soil. In the process, these place-based stands are stopping real climate crimes in progress."

She cites protests in a tourist town in Greece, a forest in Canada, a village in Romania. And from Inner Mongolia to the Amazon, from the Arctic Circle to the Keystone Pipeline, she follows the trail of protest.

"The collective response to the climate crisis," she writes, "is changing from something that primarily takes place in closed-door policy and lobbying meetings into something alive and unpredictable and very much in the streets (and mountains, and farmers' fields, and forests)."

These are not isolated acts, but interconnected ones, she argues, and that is empowering. "Fighting a giant extractive industry on your own can seem impossible, especially in a remote, sparsely populated location," she writes. "But being part of a continent-wide, even global, movement that has the industry surrounded is a very different story."

And she tallies the victories so far. "Activists have won fracking bans or moratoria in dozens of cities and towns and in much larger territories, too," she writes. "Alongside France, countries with moratoria include Bulgaria, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic." Costa Rica, she adds, banned new open-pit mining in 2010. Even China, she says, is taking steps to address the costs of pollution.

Klein also finds hope in the efforts by indigenous people to insist on their treaty rights and to fend off the mining companies. Indigenous rights, she says, "may now represent the most powerful barriers protecting all of us from a future of climate chaos."

Along the way, she debunks three examples of what she calls "magical thinking": that the free market itself will come up with the solution to the climate crisis; that billionaires will lead the way; and that scientists, through something called "geoengineering," can alter that Earth's atmosphere in such a way as to save us all.

For Klein, there are no shortcuts, no saviors.

"Only mass social movements can save us now," she writes. They are already under way, she reassures us, adding: "There is just enough time."

But it's not just about fighting one mining company here, and one oil company there.

"Any attempt to rise to the climate challenge will be fruitless," she writes, "unless it is understood as part of a much broader battle of world views, a process of rebuilding and reinventing the very idea of the collective, the communal, the commons, the civil, and the civic after so many decades of attack and neglect."

This is a powerful, profound, and compelling book. It's easy to read, and at times it's intensely personal, as when Klein discusses her own struggle with infertility in a chapter entitled "The Right to Regenerate."

Her warmth and groundedness offer an appealing complement to her deep analysis.

I came away from this book, as I trust you will, with renewed hope that we can yet save the planet. ◆

The Hellish Costs of War

War is hell. Major General Harold Greene could certainly tell you all about that—but he's dead. On August 5, Greene became the highest-ranking American soldier to die in our unfathomable, thirteen-year war in Afghanistan, joining 2,339 other service members who've paid the ultimate price for being sent by warmongering politicians into that fight for . . . for what exactly?

No President or Congressional leader has offered a coherent or credible answer, much less a compelling one, for why our troops have been made to sacrifice so much for so little for so long. Indeed, how bitterly ironic that the general was not killed by the Taliban or Al Qaeda, whom we're supposedly fighting, but by one of the Afghan government's own soldiers, whom we're supposedly helping.

Another blunt reminder of the hellish absurdity of our political leaders' quick-draw approach to war can be seen in the economic cost. The Congressional Research Service revealed a few years ago that the Afghanistan and Iraq wars had already cost U.S. taxpayers more than $1 trillion—not counting the future health care bill for veterans or the enormous interest payments that'll be made on that debt, which will multiply the amount three- or fourfold.

And the meter is still running. The Pentagon, White House, and Congress intend to keep a contingent of soldiers and trainers in both countries for the foreseeable future, plus providing more billions of our tax dollars to both countries for building their infrastructure and education systems. Meanwhile, $1 trillion and so many

JEM SULLIVAN

American lives later, Iraq is falling apart, and Afghanistan is mired in corruption and facing a Taliban takeover.

Think what $1 trillion could've done for America's poor and middle class, for our infrastructure, and for our educational system, if invested here in the past decade.

And—ready or not—here we go again. Our military has been hurled back into the chaos of Iraq. Apparently, "Mission Accomplished" is "Mission Never-ending."

We're told that, for now, America will provide only jet fighters, drones, weaponry, humanitarian airdrops, military advice, training—and, of course, our money—to the cause of making this unworkable country work. At least President Obama has put his foot down and sensibly pledged that there will be no American "boots on the ground."

However, in the politics of Iraq, don't count on "sensible" surviving the chaos or the pressure from the hawks at home who created the mess. The Shia-Sunni-Kurdish divide still rages on, now exacerbated by the theocratic Islamic State's sudden sadistic invasion.

And our own warmongering members of Congress keep baiting Obama into escalation. For example, GOP Senator Lindsey Graham says we have no choice but to return there to destroy the fanatics.

Of course, by "we," Congressional warriors like Graham don't mean they will go themselves, or send their loved ones.

Since the end of World War II, practically every American president, backed by Congress, has sent our troops to die in one deceitful war after another. From Vietnam to Grenada to Iraq, our soldiers have been in senseless wars nearly nonstop for seventy years. It's time to tell the perennial political sword-rattlers that they should wield the swords themselves, not in Congress or in the media, but in the field. Maybe then they'll see that war *is* hell. ◆

Jim Hightower produces The Hightower Lowdown newsletter and is the author, with Susan DeMarco, of Swim Against the Current: Even a Dead Fish Can Go with the Flow.

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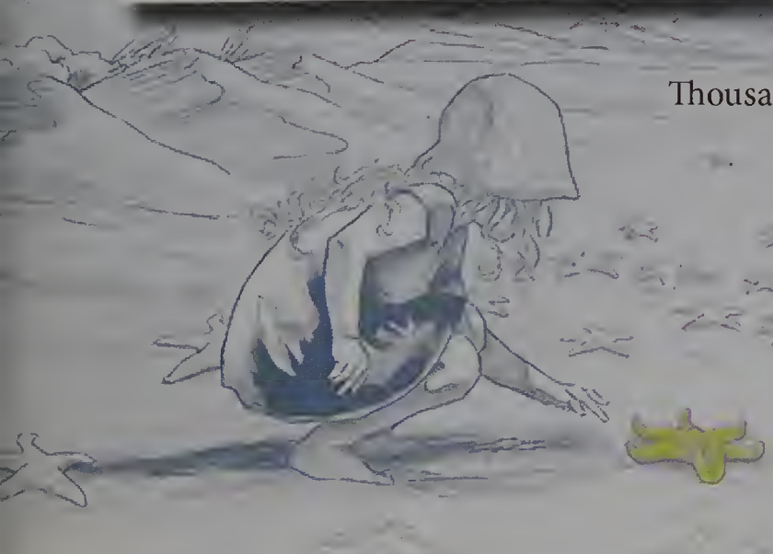

Thousands of starfish washed ashore. A little girl began throwing them in the water so they wouldn't die.

"Don't bother, dear," her mother said, "it won't make a difference."

The girl stopped for a moment and looked at the starfish in her hand.

"It will make a difference to this one."

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DON'T STAND IDLY BY
JUSTICE FOR ALL IN ISRAEL & PALESTINE

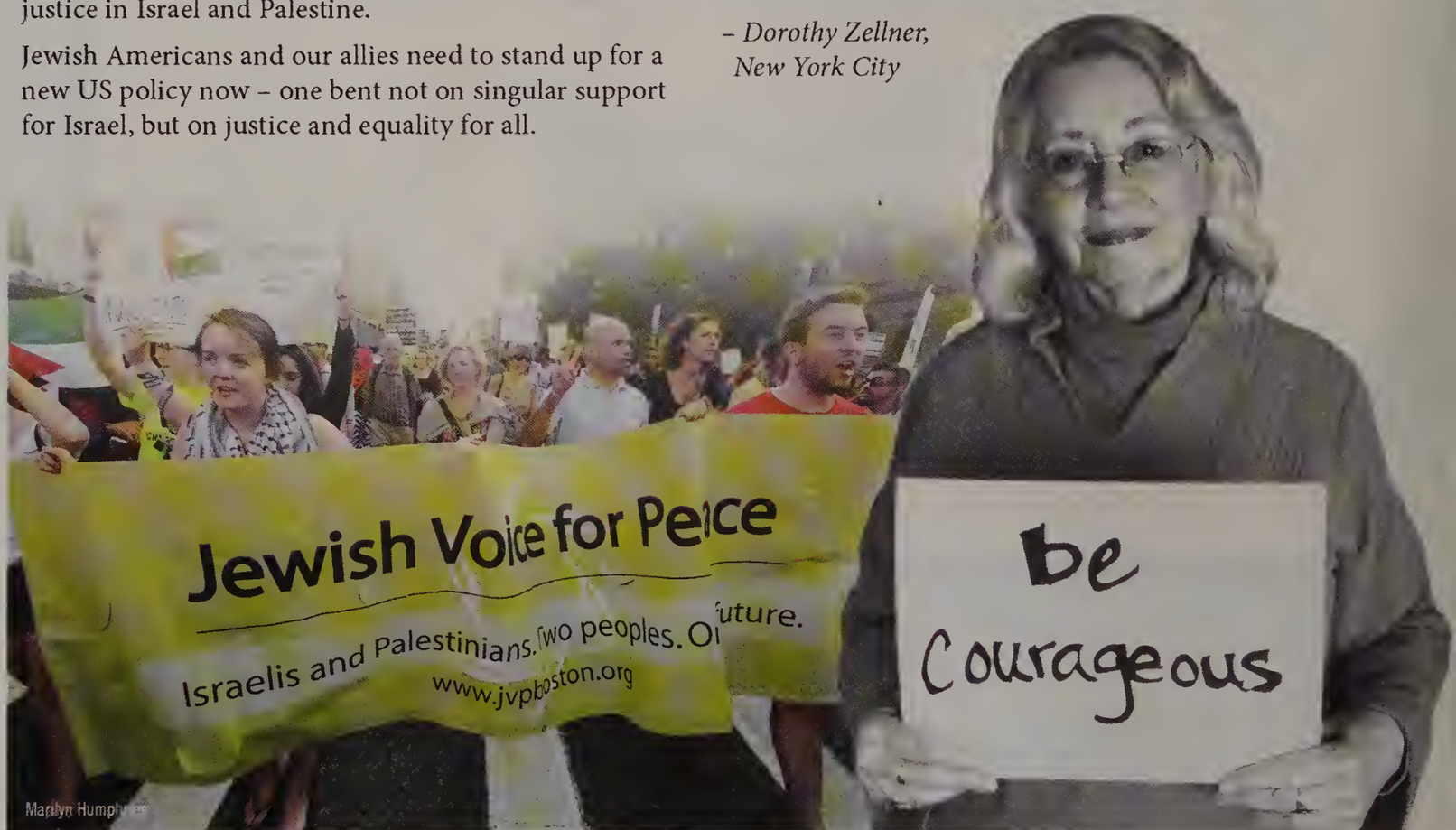
From 1962 to 1967 I was a staff member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in the South. My African American colleagues told me, "Work in your own community." And that is what I'm doing: speaking out as a Jew for justice in Israel and Palestine.

Jewish Americans and our allies need to stand up for a new US policy now – one bent not on singular support for Israel, but on justice and equality for all.

Our voices can make the difference.

The most principled, creative organization working for that change is Jewish Voice for Peace. They're doing what no other Jewish organization is doing today: putting our values into action. **Join us.**

– Dorothy Zellner, New York City



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